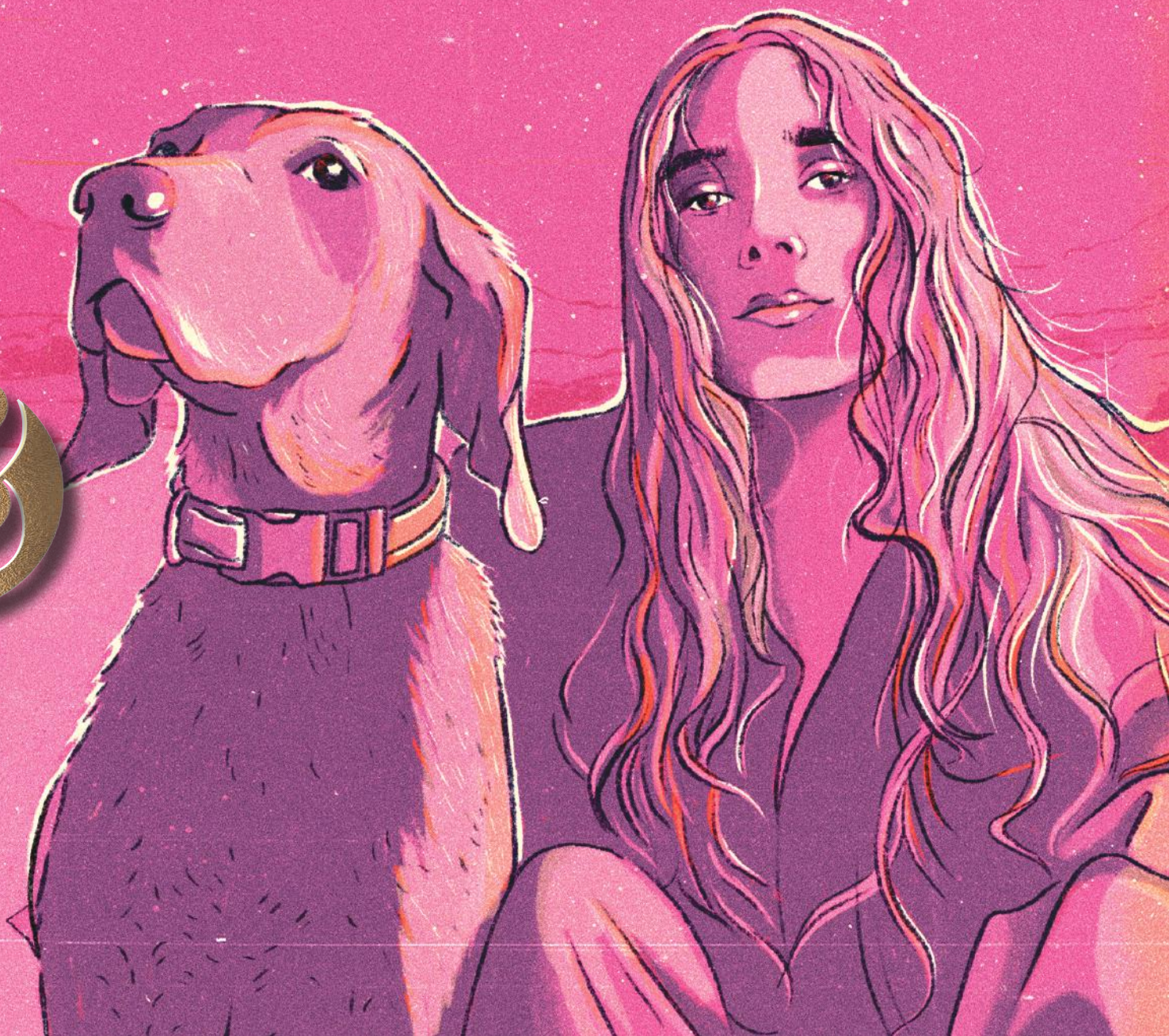


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ON AIR, ONLINE, & IN PRINT

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**Mia McCarthy** – is a young writer based in Cape Town. She is an avid collector of coffee shops, tidal pools, and interesting true stories. Mia has a passion for creating magic in the kitchen and much of her writing reflects this. She continues to inspire readers through her contributions to this magazine and The Edit, our fortnightly digital newsletter.



**Dan Charles** – is the editor-in-chief of Life & Style. He is also a writer, a musician, and a friend to all the cats who live in his apartment complex, who constantly interrupt his work by bellowing for tuna and chin-scratching. He always has time for them just like he always has time for a good story - even when they pester him at odd hours of the day.



**Rosa-Karoo Loewe** – is a journalist, copywriter and media producer. After three years covering news in the Eastern Cape, she now writes about culture, food, travel and the arts. Trained in theatre, an advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights, she flits between the hiking trails and dancefloors of Cape Town.



**Stefan Botha** – is the Founder & Director of Rainmaker Marketing. Holding a BCom in Marketing from Stellenbosch University and an Honours degree in Marketing and Tourism from the University of Cape Town, Stefan has spent the past 18 years shaping the property development marketing landscape across Southern Africa and beyond.



**Lisa Smith** – a freelance graphic designer and marketer who loves the heartbeat of the North Coast. With her newspaper and magazine industry experience Lisa has a passion to nurture brands with their online and offline presence through concise copy and creative design. When not sitting behind her laptop, Lisa spends time with homeless cats and getting outdoors.

## LIFE & STYLE

**Our print publications, website and social media platforms have shaped opinion in the KZN North Coast region for over twenty years creating a media brand that is credible, authoritative, and universally acclaimed.**

Having expanded the platform to include Ballito's only commercial radio station – **Radio Life & Style 88.0FM** that also streams digitally via free apps on every platform, we now own the local media scene.

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- 46 — If You Don't Pick It Up, It'll Stop Calling You : *Manu Grace*

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Studio MUTI Design



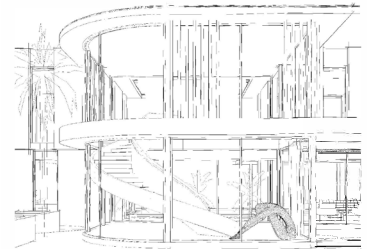
# BOLD DESIGN - COASTAL LIVING



**For the past 23 years, CA Architects has helped shape the skyline of Ballito and the North Coast. Led by Kyle Botha and Llewellyn Cronje, alongside Shane Perry and Marizka Botha, the boutique studio is known for its creative approach, attention to detail, and commitment to designing homes as unique as the people who live in them.**

Every so often, a project comes along that feels especially meaningful. Designing a home for your father is one of those rare opportunities. You might expect impossible expectations and endless revisions, but the brief was refreshingly simple: "I want something unique." Challenge accepted.

From the moment you arrive, this home makes a statement. Guests cross a dramatic koi pond via floating concrete "lily pads," before stepping onto a glass floor that reveals the wine cellar below, a memorable introduction to a home that celebrates bold design.



Created for effortless entertaining, the open-plan living spaces flow onto an expansive patio anchored by a striking 14-seater live-edge dining table. A built-in braai, entertainer's bar and custom-designed beach pool complete the resort-style experience, making every gathering feel like a holiday.



Set on a triangular site, the architecture cleverly reflects the shape of the property, creating a lush tropical courtyard at its heart. This green oasis unfolds throughout the home, connecting spaces and enhancing the sense of tranquillity. Each of the three bedrooms serves as a private retreat, featuring an en-suite bathroom and outdoor shower for a touch of tropical luxury.

The main suite is particularly special, overlooking the pool and landscaped gardens and offering a peaceful escape framed by birdsong and swaying palms.



When the entertaining ends, a secluded boma area awaits. Complete with its own braai and wood-fired hot tub, it provides the perfect setting for relaxed evenings beneath the North Coast stars.

Whether it's a contemporary coastal retreat, a luxury entertainer's haven, or a tropical escape, CA Architects believes every home should tell a unique story. This remarkable residence is proof that when imagination meets thoughtful design, extraordinary things happen.

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## WHERE THE LIGHT IS

*Friends, welcome to an issue of Life & Style awash with Winter light.*

**A**S MUCH AS IT PAINS ME to leave the gangly arms of my parents' beloved dog Willow (who you can see in the picture accompanying this letter), I really need to book a flight back to Cape Town. It's been almost two months since I absconded to Ballito from my gorgeous little apartment in Tamboerskloof, leaving it to fend for itself just as the cold Winter months were beginning to creep into its bones. Dear lord, I can only imagine the kind of nightmarish science experiments that await my return from the inside of my fridge, which I certainly did not clean out thoroughly enough before I left.

I honestly did not intend to stay in Ballito for this long, but - despite missing out on a few invitations to some fun-looking events, despite missing my friends a whole lot, and despite worrying an awful lot about the state of my fridge and my apartment - I am glad that I did. I got to play guitar with my dad and drink whiskey with my mom. I got to spend some time with the core Life & Style team as we finished working on this magazine and discussed big ideas for its future. Most importantly, I got to make my 5-year-old nephew smile while he recovered from heart surgery to help repair a valve defect that he's had since birth. That first week post-surgery was really tough on him. It was tough for all of the people who love that little guy so so much, especially my brother and his wife. But, bless that little guy, he seems to be doing a lot better now. I like to think that his squeezing the trigger of the "Despicable Me 4 Mini Fart Blaster" I gave him, aimed at his uncle's face, while riotously cackling at the silly sounds of synthetic flatulence, helped his poor, precious heart. I know that it did mine.

There has been a whole lot of wonderful light during my stay in my old hometown. I'm very grateful for it. I'm very grateful to have many places where I can feel like I belong, especially during a time when the idea of "belonging" has been contested with such hostility. Friends, I hope that you too are reading this in a place that makes you feel like you belong there. I hope you can offer that same feeling to others around you as well.

The vicious cold of Cape Town's Winters tends to bring out the melancholy in me. I think that's why the previous few covers of our Winter Editions have been a bit dark and moody. But this time around, the cover is as pink



as the magnificent Ballito sunrises; we have Manu Grace and her dear dog, Sadie, beautifully illustrated by our friends from Studio Muti, and I am reminded of just how beautiful the light is during this season.

And so, it is with great delight that I welcome you to share in some of that light throughout this issue of Life & Style. It's a beautiful read, with stories about people sharing the light in their lives. I'll certainly be turning to it on the flight back to Cape Town.

*Yours, ever-grateful-but-still-wincing-at-the-cost-of-plane-tickets.*

Dan



**"To be so vulnerable when you are so vulnerable -  
I found it really hard."**

Cover Story page 46 — If You Don't Pick It Up, It'll Stop Calling You





# LIVE MORE DOG

## CHOMMIES

**T**HE STORY OF CHOMMIES began with a move and a puppy. Founder and Creative Director Nathalie Klijn, born in Stuttgart, Germany, left Europe in 2012 for Cape Town in pursuit of a slower and more fulfilling way of life. Not long after arriving, she adopted a Boerboel-Ridgeback-Bullmastiff rescue named Ringo. What started as a side project making collars for Ringo and a few canine friends has since grown into a brand beloved by dogs and their humans across South Africa.

Rooted in the rich colour palettes of Cape Town's coastlines and mountains, Chommies creates beautifully crafted collars, leashes, harnesses and accessories that combine practical functionality with joyful design.

*Life & Style* spoke to **Natasha Kurten, Retail Manager at Chommies**, about the story behind the brand, the philosophy of "Live More Dog", and how a small side project grew into one of South Africa's most loved dog lifestyle brands.

### How did Chommies begin?

Chommies was founded after Nathalie relocated from Germany to Cape Town in 2012. Not long after arriving, she adopted her rescue dog, Ringo, and began searching for products that felt both beautiful and functional.

At the time, there was very little available that reflected the quality, craftsmanship and aesthetic she was looking for. What started as making a collar for one dog quickly evolved into something bigger. Chommies was born from a simple idea: the products we share with our dogs should be made with the same care and consideration as the things we choose for ourselves.

From the beginning, dogs have been at the centre of everything we do. They remind us to slow down, be present and find joy in everyday moments, a philosophy that continues to shape the brand today.

### What was the inspiration behind the look and feel of the House of Chommies concept store, and why was it important for Chommies to create a physical retail space?

While online shopping offers convenience, we have always believed there is something irreplaceable about experiencing products in person. We wanted to create a space where people could engage with the craftsmanship behind our products, feel the materials, experience the colours and connect with the stories behind each piece.

The House of Chommies was never intended to be a traditional retail store. It was designed as a welcoming space inspired by Cape Town's relaxed way of life, where people and their dogs could spend time together, discover beautiful things and feel part of a community.

More than a store, it is an expression of the Chommies world: thoughtful, colourful, dog-friendly and rooted in a holiday state of mind.





*"Dogs have a remarkable way of reminding us what matters. They encourage us to get outside, connect with others, slow down and fully engage with the world around us. "Live More Dog" is our invitation to bring more of that spirit into everyday life."*

CHOMMIES





### What goes into the process of designing each new Chommies collection, and where do you find inspiration?

Every Chommies collection takes time. Products move through multiple rounds of design, refinement and testing before they reach our shelves. We believe quality is worth waiting for and that craftsmanship should never be rushed.

Our inspiration comes largely from the world around us. Cape Town's unique light, Africa's landscapes, natural textures, colour combinations found in nature and the feeling of being outdoors with your dog all influence our creative process.

Rather than following trends, we focus on creating products that feel timeless, functional and joyful. We want every piece to add beauty to everyday life while standing the test of time.

### What do you think has been the key to Chommies' growth and success?

There was never a single defining moment or piece of advice. Growth happened gradually through the response of our customers and community.

From the beginning, people connected with the idea that dog products could be beautifully made, thoughtfully designed and crafted to last. That encouragement gave us confidence to keep building.

What continues to guide us today is a commitment to making products we genuinely believe in. By focusing on quality, craftsmanship and authenticity rather than chasing growth for its own sake, Chommies has grown organically into the brand it is today.

### Chommies works closely with artisans and knitters. How has that community shaped the brand?

The artisan community behind Chommies has evolved naturally over time through relationships, collaboration and a shared commitment to craftsmanship.

The Mohair collection emerged during lockdown when many family members of our artisans began knitting from home. What started as a practical solution became something much larger and has since grown into one of the most loved parts of the Chommies offering.

Working closely with skilled makers continues to shape everything we do. Their knowledge, creativity and attention to detail constantly inspire us and remind us that exceptional products are always the result of many hands working together.

### A phrase often associated with Chommies is: "Craft isn't a trend, it's our operating system." What does that philosophy mean to the brand?

At Chommies, craft is not something that gets added at the end of a process. It is where everything begins.

It influences what we make, how we make it, who we work with and the standards we hold ourselves to. We believe that true craftsmanship creates products with integrity, products that are functional, beautiful and built to last.

In a world that often prioritises speed and convenience, we choose to value quality, skill and thoughtful production. Craft is not a trend for us. It is the foundation on which the business has been built.

### The Chommies philosophy is "Live More Dog". What does that mean?

Ringo remains an important part of the Chommies origin story, but the philosophy of "Live More Dog" extends far beyond one dog.

At its heart, it is about embracing some of the qualities we admire most in dogs: presence, curiosity, loyalty, playfulness and an ability to find joy in ordinary moments.

Dogs have a remarkable way of reminding us what matters. They encourage us to get outside, connect with others, slow down and fully engage with the world around us. "Live More Dog" is our invitation to bring more of that spirit into everyday life.

### What's your favourite thing about making a living out of creating beautiful things for animals?

What we find most rewarding is creating products that strengthen the relationship between people and their dogs.

Dogs bring so much joy, companionship and connection into our lives. Being able to celebrate that relationship through thoughtfully designed products is a privilege.

Beyond the products themselves, Chommies is about creating meaningful work, supporting craftsmanship and building a community of people who share a love for dogs, beautiful design and a life well lived. That combination is what continues to inspire us every day.

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# THE L&S EDIT

EVERY TWO WEEKS, Life & Style writers Mia McCarthy and Shannon Devy come together to collate all the best design, fashion, art, music, décor and books they've come across in recent days. They curate these discoveries in the L&S Edit, a fabulous newsletter for anyone interested in style, craft and creativity.

It comes out every second Friday, and it's 100% free. Why not subscribe?

Just scan our QR code, enter your email address, and expect a fabulous morning read to land in your inbox Friday morning.

Here are some highlights from the L&S Edit archives:

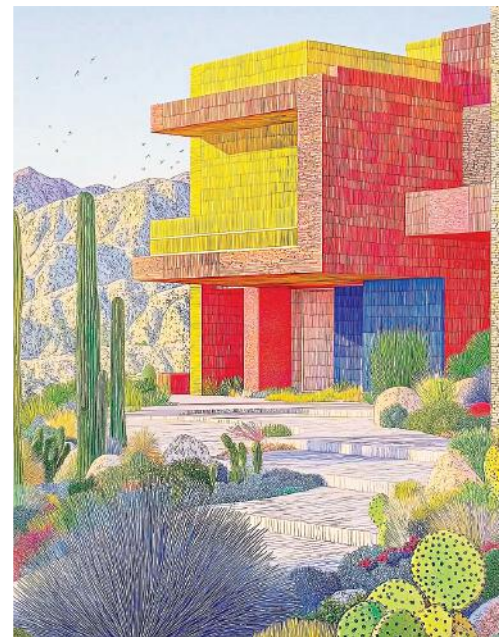
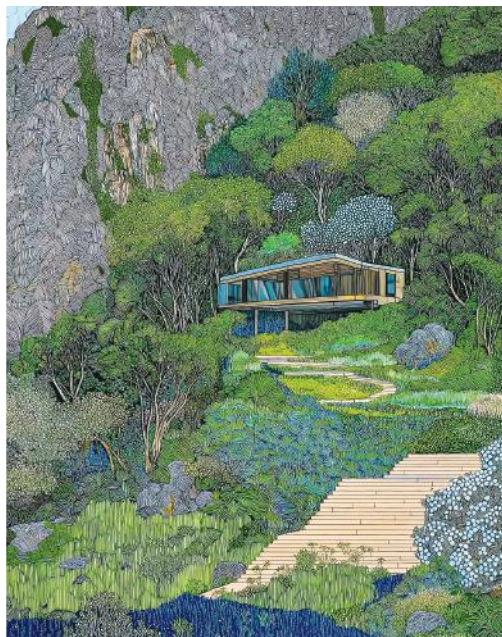
## Art



### RICHARD NADLER

Digital and embroidery artist Richard Nadler weaves gorgeously textured pieces out of colour and shape. His ArchiTextures collection is particularly beautiful. In it, he transforms structural forms into a potent visual language, merging organic elements with the built environment to create images that are both structured and surreal.

*@dernadler*





## NAPALOSA

Shannon has been knitting fervently as winter makes its steady approach, so imagine our delight when we found the Furry Lamp by knitwear designer Nelly Bellegarde. The perfect marriage of our respective interests: knitting and ambient lighting. These fuzzy shades add the perfect touch of seventies-shag kitsch, don't you think?

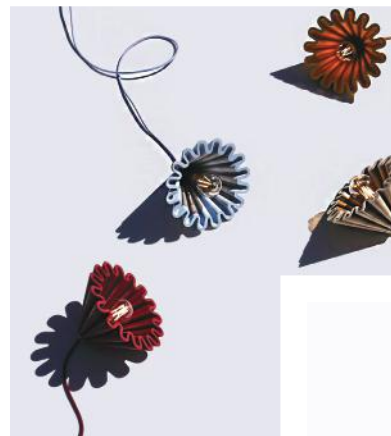
@napalosa\_



## ISOBEL HILL

We're loving these ceramic lamp bases and lampshades thrown and painted by artist Isobel Hill for her 2025 show, *Savour This Moment*. The exhibition features recurring personal motifs plucked from her rural surroundings, including Flamborough Lighthouse and her late West Highland White Terriers. In Hill's words, "I wanted to bring focus to the act of a person savouring both fond and unwelcome memories. Throughout these pieces, this notion is something that I have explored in themes surrounding worry, everyday routine, and sense of place."

@izziehilly



## ALKALINE GATHERED PENDANT

We might be in the grip of winter, but these darling blooms from Alkaline Designs make us think fondly of the Springtime to come. The Gather pendant reflects a design language inspired by the many-layered meaning of the word itself. "Gather" brings to mind the gathering of pleats in cloth, of petals around a stem, and people brought together.

[alkaline-shop.com/collections/all](https://alkaline-shop.com/collections/all)







## Fashion

### Noi Collective



The idea behind Noi was seeded during a tour across Asia, where co-founders and decades-long friends Ryan Hing and Lethabo Motlatle identified an opportunity to introduce forward-thinking fashion design to the South African market. Noi clothing prioritises intention, quality, and design innovation.

Their designs feature a signature integration of modularity, style, and function. If you're a fan of the silhouettes typically found in contemporary Japanese fashion think asymmetric shirts and skirts, faux corsetry, and an exaggerated barrel-leg trouser then you're going to love shopping this local brand.

We think everyone should wear a pair of tabis, even just once.

[noicollective.com](http://noicollective.com)

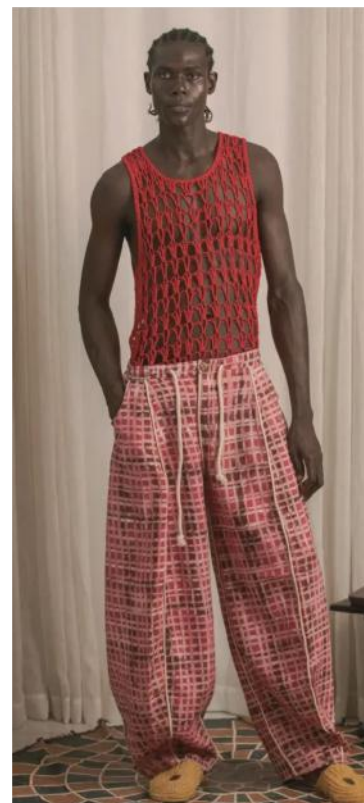
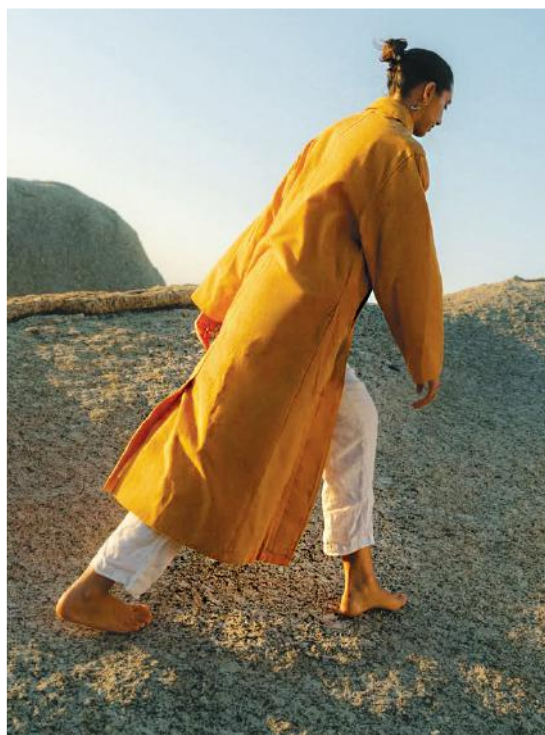


### Studio Limau

Limau is a Cape Town-based slow fashion brand creating statement cotton pieces inspired by travel. Their silhouettes are "romantic yet practical" — designed to make getting dressed an effortless occasion that does not compromise on style.

Their cotton twill coats are more likely to draw your attention as the weather cools, but rest assured that we'll be breaking out the co-ord pinstripe sets come Spring.

[studiolimau.com](http://studiolimau.com)



### Pettre Taylor

Pettre Taylor is a contemporary Nigerian fashion brand founded by Peter Acha in 2019. The label is known for interweaving traditional African craftsmanship with intercultural silhouettes and modern cuts, producing garments that are simultaneously timeless and fashion-forward. Their clothes often feature intricate embroidery and handwoven textiles that highlight the skill and artistry of the in-house artisans.

Pettre Taylor's creative direction draws inspiration from themes of identity, migration, and cultural exchange — a global perspective that has found a home on the catwalks of Nigerian Fashion Week

[pettretaylor.com](http://pettretaylor.com)



## Design

### GABRIELLA MARCELLA'S STUDIO

A stark industrial unit in Glasgow has been transformed into a riot of fun and colour at the hands of designer Gabriella Marcella, founder of Risotto studio, which makes brightly coloured stationery and other products using the risograph printing method. Absolutely stunning!

[gabriellamarcella.com](http://gabriellamarcella.com)



## Accessories

### TSHEPISO JEWELLERY

Tshepiso is the eponymous brand of the founder and metalsmith Tshepiso Lekganyane. Lekganyane completed a degree in fine art, but has always harboured a keen interest in fashion. In 2019, they graduated from the Alchimia Contemporary Jewellery School in Florence, Italy, and thus soldered their twin interests in fashion and art.

Tshepiso Jewellery is defined by a signature relationship to organic geometry, with pieces that often take on the texture and shape of stone-like the rocky folds of the Cederberg, or the pitted surface of the moon.

[tshepiso.com/collections](http://tshepiso.com/collections)



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# ALCHEMY OF THE SOIL, MAGIC IN THE BUTTER

## Babylonstoren

Words: Rosa-Karoo Loewe

**T**HERE IS BUTTER here that will ruin you for other butter. It is made by hand each morning by an Italian-trained cheesemaker, and it sits in cheesecloth on the breakfast harvest table in a large wooden bowl. You spread it on bread that was baked just before dawn from a sourdough starter that is nine years old, and the combination is so straightforward and lush, nothing else matters.

This is Babylonstoren's particular trick: the extraordinary delivered without announcement. A five-hectare garden that feeds three restaurants. A cellar producing 10 wines from slopes at 620 metres above sea level. A working dairy, a rice paddy, a bee museum, an online empire, an essential oil palace, workshops constantly, the farm has been here, in one form or another, since 1692, and every layer of it - the soil, the buildings, the animals, the food - has been tended to without flash. It simply shows up in the butter.

### Once we go around the corner

The drive up Simonsberg Mountain begins at the reception gates. Axwyn, our activity guide, takes us up in a farm vehicle before dinner on the first evening. Winding past the trout dams, herds of wild buck on the lower pastures, an eland female standing in long shadow beneath a tree. She looks at the vehicle, unimpressed, and steps back into the foliage.

"Once we go around the corner," Axwyn says, "you will see paradise."

The Franschhoek ranges open across the valley in the last of the afternoon light. Table Mountain and Lion's Head against the horizon, Paarl and Franschhoek in the middle distance. The king proteas along the ridge are coming into bloom, the first blush of colour on the fynbos. Mphepo, a sacred indigenous African herb (genus *Helichrysum*) grows wild in the scrub beside the track.

Axwyn parks, carries a woven basket up to a wooden deck, sets out a picnic table, pours the wine. Celery with a citrus preserve. A few crackers. This olive harvest, he tells us, is the best in five years. The farm dates back to 1692, when Governor Simon van der Stel granted the free burgher Pieter van der Byl a piece of land at the foot of a conical hill — named, in Dutch, Babilonische Tooren, because the hill's shape reminded the first farmers of the Tower of Babel. More history is that the name also captures the linguistic collision which took place in the valley: Dutch, French, German, Khoi, San, and the words that arrived with the Asian spice trade, all tangled in etymology at the foot of the same mountain.

A southern boubou lands on the railing. Normally a shy bird, this one has learned where the crumbs will be deposited. It tiptoes forward and snaps up a dropped seed cracker, then holds its ground to assess the situation.

"It's a regular," Axwyn says. Is it a tea spot or cheese-and-wine bird?

We watch the sun drop behind the mountains and head back down to change for dinner.





*"Once we go around the corner, you will see paradise."*

Axwyn - Babylonstoren activity guide





## The cottage

One of thirteen, built in Cape Dutch style on the footprints of the original farm labourers' quarters. Thick whitewashed walls, elegant gables, a fireplace with a good stack of wood beside it. Bookshelves with English and Afrikaans titles. A contemporary glass cube added onto the 18th-century structure holds the kitchen and dining area, and because it faces the garden entirely, the sense of being outside doesn't leave, even when you're in.

The bedroom has French roller doors opening straight into the en-suite bathroom. A claw-foot bath positioned to face the bed. The wooden floors were recycled from the old roof beams, we're told. Beside the front door, two helmets, two pairs of Wellington boots, lined up and expectant. The bicycles sit outside.

The guest book on the desk is thick with entries. Most are grateful to the point of gushing. A few pages near the back are children's drawings - small people, animals, a fat yellow sun. A woman we passed earlier in the garden, wrestling her toddler's shoes back on, had said, to no one in particular: "You can never run out of things to do here."

A welcome box on the counter holds seasonal fruit and a welcome note. We receive roasted almonds, olive oil, and fresh juice. Still water and sparkling at every turn. The farm finds small ways to keep you fed that feel less like a service and more like instinct. They know when you need what you need before you need it, you know?

## Babel

Their ethos is alchemy, transforming the crumbling history into reinvented living. Their esteemed restaurant Babel is redesigned from the old cow shed. Floor-to-ceiling glass walls, white, clean and chic. This is farm-to-table, seasonal and what's not made here, is sourced locally.

In the orange candlelight, a harvest table is laid with nametags and offerings of what we will be eating tonight. This is The Library Table, a visual representation with origin, tasting notes, and maker.

The waiters wear large nametags, readable from across a table, which matters because you are served by the same people across multiple meals.

The menu divides into Stirrings, Progression and Culmination.

The season's first winter beetroot has come in, and it arrives simply, alongside Alta's cumin buffalo hangkop cheese. Two things that have no business being as right together as they are. The mozzarella with Adine's butternut atchar: creamy and bouncy, the zing of the pickle cutting straight through the milk fat. Cape Point tuna ceviche with buffalo yoghurt dressing and winter fennel, soft and cold and just shy of the acid tipping point.





For Progression: Riebeek Kasteel lamb with braised butter beans and mint gremolata. The lamb gives at the fork. Each bite with a bean is its own small thing, a classic Mediterranean pairing done without complication. The dry-aged Chianina steak - from the farm's own herd - arrives with charred shallots in a mustard jus, the shallot bitter and sweet at once, cutting through the richness.

Across the room the kitchen is open-plan and in perpetual motion. The chef of the evening is focused, people come in and out with the ease of a kitchen that has found its rhythm. On the right side of the pass, a naked cake sits adorned with pressed flowers. I find it very hard not to stare at it. Target fixation.

A table of Americans near the door has established a handshake with one of the tall waiters during dinner, a sequence of moves they have rehearsed over the course of several courses. They cheer each other through it on the way out, laughing, getting it about half right as they push through the glass doors into the cold.

Culmination: chocolate decadence, a citrus crème brûlée. Divine.

We walk back, past chickens asleep on bicycle handlebars.

### Kobus knows

We've seen the farm from above, and now in the early morning sun, we walk it with Kobus.

The morning walk starts with a little show, the White Peking ducks waddle out towards the vines, led by a duck herder, to eat slugs and snails, nature pest control and cutie patooties. We watch them take small dips in the puddles between the vines, sunlight catching in flecks of water on their feathers.

Kobus has been a guide here for 11 years. Previous guests had mentioned his name before we arrived, and as discussed, he knows everything.

We crossed a wooden walkway over the dam. A cormorant lifts off a pole as we approach. Overhead, Weavers are mid-construction on their nests. We keep going, past Waterblommietjies on one side of the walkway, an Arborio rice paddy on the other. The birds developed a taste for it before the nets went up.

"When I started here 11 years ago, there were no nets," Kobus says. "We had two drummer boys making noise to chase the birds away until dawn. If the wind was blowing, you could hear them from the garden."

We follow a path into a stretch of forest, the river running fast and strong after recent rains. It's muddy. I ask whether anyone has ever attempted the walk in heels.

He laughs and has had to politely nudge, "Ma'am, this is a walk, please go get your gumboots, otherwise you are not going to make it."





There is a bamboo cave along this path, woven by hand and repaired after each storm. The buck sometimes shelter in it."On two occasions I have been standing right here, and the buck ran out from inside," he says. "That is why I talk loudly."

There is so much consideration for nature here, you feel it, taste it, and hear it on any of the excursions offered.

A new addition to the farm is the Byzantium, a bee museum, fitting as there are over 100 hives, and a joyously thick, mouth-watering array of honeys for sale.

We walk through the vegetable garden, bursting with herbs and small saplings in neat lines, basking in the sunlight.

### **Gundula's garden**

The first thing Gundula Deutschländer talks about, arriving at the Healing Garden gate, are chickens.

"To allow for regeneration," she says, "chickens come first."

She has been part of the gardening team since Babylonstoren opened, tending to what she treats as something between a laboratory and a relationship.

She moves through the garden picking things up as she goes, offering everything out to taste and smell with the manner of someone whose enthusiasm has not dimmed from repetition. She crushes a fresh olive against her skin - a trick she learned during the pandemic - and holds her arm out. She pinches off the flowering head of the *Acmella oleracea* "toothache" plant, or Buzz Button, which looks something like a Licorice Allsort, and tells us to taste it. Our mouths go numb.

Little creatures have come to roam the bounty, the squirrels being cheeky fruit stealers.

"They take a bite and throw the fruit over their shoulders and wink at you. What they like changes every season. They started sharpening their teeth on the garden furniture in the hotel, which is imported from Paris."

The Cape Sour fig (*Carpobrotus edulis*) is a living groundcover, also providing a softer landing for falling fruit. It grows along sand dunes on the coast, and medicinally comes with about seven varieties.

She loves begonias. "A real Tannie plant" she says, plucking a red flower and lifting it to the sun. It sparkles like crystal.

The garden is her child; she's been waiting all summer for the purple beans to ripen.

"Our story is very simple, it's about you, the traveller finding refreshment again, like in the Cape. I love that everybody has an adventure here. The garden is so welcoming; people have their own personal relationships here. I've heard so many stories of our gardens as a companion."

Her sanctuary is the Healing Garden, planted according to the human body,

head to feet: herbs for the mind at the top, working down through the lungs, the stomach, the heart.

She stops at the cancer bush and explains its bitterness, its immune-building properties, the way the body receives it. There's an ashwagandha whose berries are so bitter even the birds won't touch them. A mountain marigold from high-altitude New Mexico that flowers for them in winter, "a friendly pot and a medicine pot," she says, "a cheerful antidepressant." She rolls a leaf of Artemisia between her fingers and holds it out; she tells us she tucks it inside her mask on flights.

"When I dug holes for these trees," she says, gesturing at beds dense with life, "I dug up so much rubbish. It was all dead. No earthworms, nothing." An installation of old pottery sits pressed into the soil nearby, a reminder of what the ground was before. "Pottery, it's like digging through history."

"Our story is very simple," she says, near the end. "It's about the traveller finding refreshment again. The garden is so welcoming. People have their own personal relationships with it. I've heard so many stories of our garden as a companion."

"As we've developed, we've gone back to our foundation."

That evening, we found a bunch of sour fig succulents and two small curry leaf saplings at our door to take home.

## Wine

The winemaker's stated philosophy is truth to the area and simplicity. We descend into the wine tunnel with a group of strangers and sit at a long wooden table. Ten glasses. Before this we are taken through the winemaking philosophy, the industry and the innovation from man-made to machinery. Underground, it feels like another world.

The Sprankel opens with macadamia nuts. The Chenin Blanc brings sweet melon. By the Viognier, paired with jalapeño soft cheese, the table is laughing. The Sémillon with pastrami, the Chardonnay with almonds rolled in cheese. We're making conversation across the wood now,

Then comes the second flight. The wines move on to the reds: Mourvèdre Rosé with trout, Babel with dark chocolate, Cabernet with biltong, Shiraz with Chianina chorizo. The Nebukadnesar, their flagship, comes last, paired with white chocolate-covered macadamia nuts. Ten wines representing the range of what these slopes can do.

We leave a little buzzed for dinner.





## La Serata

The Old Bakery's Italian evening is served family style. Antipasti on wooden boards and a warm bubbly nature to the night. The pizza oven is behind us. I watch the chef prepare 17 pizzas, all sitting on a shelf, waiting to turn into crispy, gooey, perfection.

Before this, one of the waiters steps forward and makes a warm introduction, taking us back to a small Italian farm.

Then, the music gets louder. What I thought was blasting from the speakers is the prowess of an opera singer, who walks in between diners belting crisp soprano. I was in awe.

The room absorbs each song and applauds the performance. Then the next dance is the waiters with boards and slices to share.

The ravioli is delicious. We stay at the table longer than we need to.

## The farm before breakfast

The buffalo tour leaves early. We leave later. Our fault entirely, and Babylon-storen's response is to find us another guide and take us anyway, just the two of us, to Rietvlei on the lower part of the farm while the main group is already somewhere ahead.

The herd is large: Molly, Patsy, Sina, and the others, enormous animals who nonetheless carry themselves with a particular passive calm. Each one returns to the same spot in the milking shed every day. If a new staff member joins the team, milk production drops 10 to 20 per cent while the herd adjusts. They are, it turns out, creatures of both great size and great feeling.

We walk into the dairy mid-session. The smell of warm milk, the mechanical rhythm of the equipment, the buffalo standing patiently in their stalls. Afterwards, the calves. Bottle-feeding a water buffalo calf is not graceful; they push hard at the bottle and your whole arm follows, but the focus on their faces while they drink is something else entirely. On the way out, a box where guests can submit name suggestions for new arrivals. We take this seriously. Puma and Shabby may one day join the herd.

## Wind and mud and the view from the top

We took the bicycles out after all. Kei apples grow along the hedgerows - small, tart, bright yellow — and you can pick them as you pass, which we did, eating as we cycled. The Chianina cattle and one cow are curious when you cycle past them; the black bull is there for size reference. The Chianina are giants. Vast and white and placid, an ancient Italian breed.

At the dam, we decided to take out a canoe. Westerly had other ideas. Within





minutes of getting onto the water, we had been pushed sideways across to the far bank, paddling hard against an imitable force. We used the oars to drag ourselves along the bank back to where we'd started, and we were drier at the beginning than the end, and it was very funny.

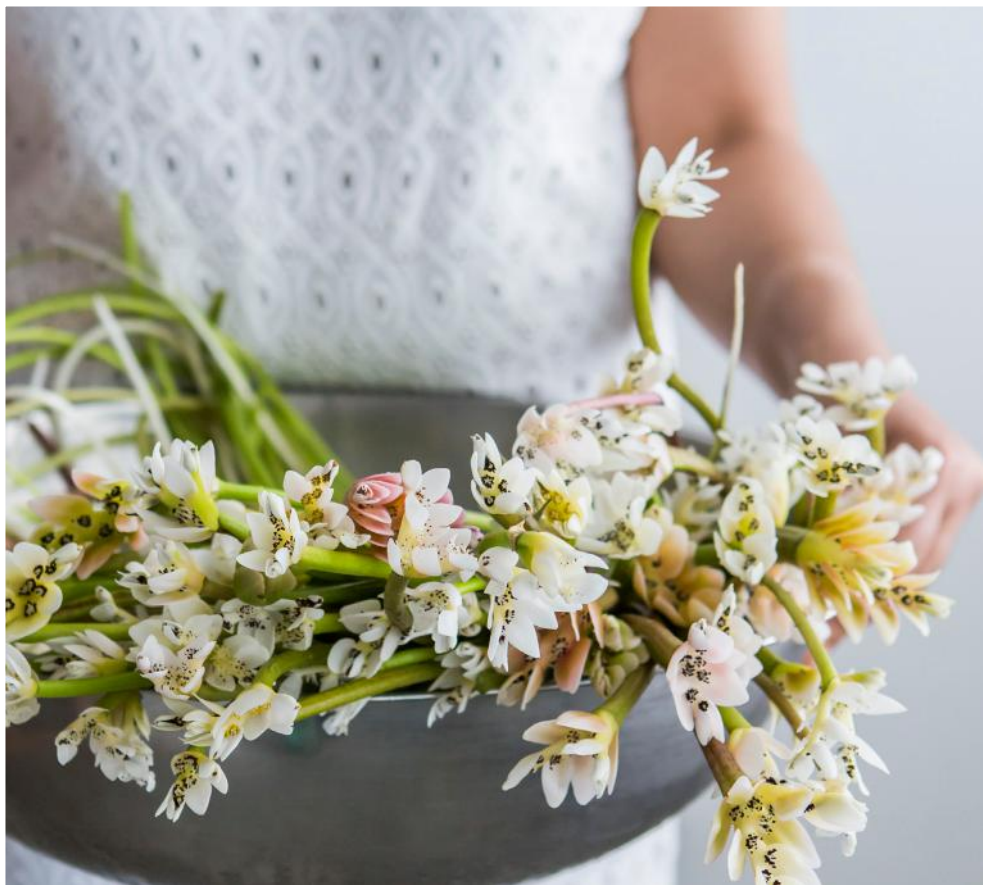
Cycling on, we hiked up the Babylonstoren hillock, the farm's conical, towering namesake, visible from almost everywhere on the property. It's a proper climb. At the top, an old cannon, and below it, the whole farm laid out: the garden's geometry, the cottages, the winery. Along the base of a hedge below us, farm workers have stopped for their midday break. A neat row of green overalls stretched out on the grass in the sun, fast asleep. The wind rustles through the fynbos. We snacked on almonds.

The farm's first commercial wine harvest was in 2011. The garden was planted in 2009. When Karen Roos bought Babylonstoren in 2007, parts of the formal garden were dead dirt: no earthworms, no life. Gundula told us this herself, standing in beds so dense with growth that the squirrels are still getting above themselves and the chickens have claimed the bicycles.

What has been created since then- the mozzarella, the Sprinkel, the sourdough, the Healing Garden, the buffalo calves waiting for names - are the result of years of patient, unglamorous work that the beauty of the farm doesn't hide so much as reward. The alchemy is real, it's handfuls of the soil.

*Babylonstoren is located in the Cape Winelands, approximately one hour from Cape Town. The sunset mountain drive is available to guests staying two or more nights.  
Garden entrance is R150 per adult, valid for 12 months.*

[www.babylonstoren.com](http://www.babylonstoren.com)  
@babylonstoren





# Earthy Elegance Grounded

Words: Lisa Smith



Where wood, stone, glass and fabric unite

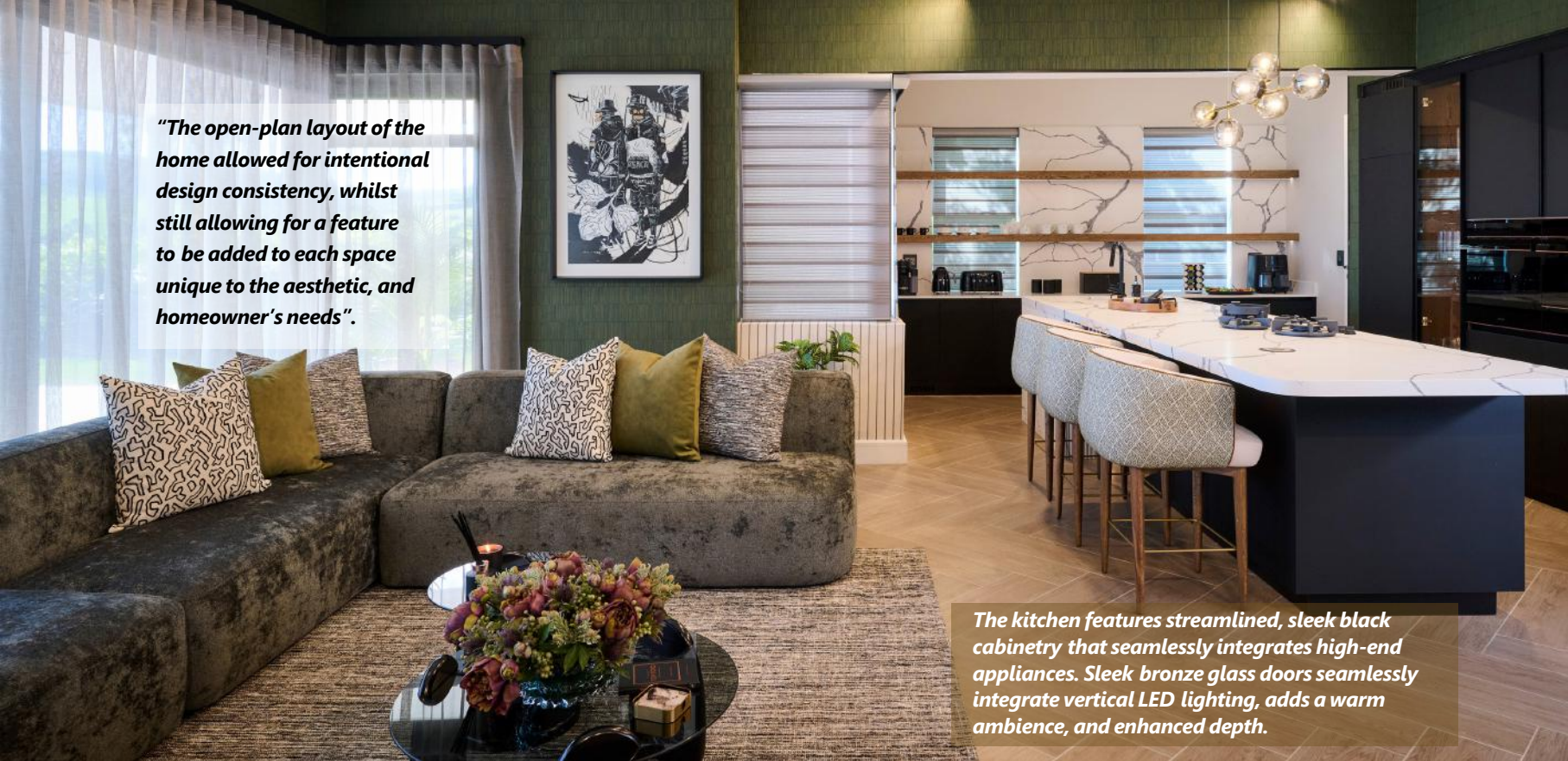
## **A SANCTUARY THAT IS BOTH GROUNDED AND ELEGANT.**

The homeowners of this ground level, open plan home set within an exclusive wine estate in the beautiful Natal Midlands desired a space to complement the peace and tranquility of its surroundings.

A full renovation project, OLALA completely gutted the existing structure offering a blank canvas to execute a full turnkey luxury interior - installing new flooring, ceilings, layered lighting, bespoke cabinetry, kitchen, bedrooms, bathrooms and living spaces.

OLALA Interiors presents a home infused with earthy, organic elegance - a refined, inviting sanctuary wrapped in comfort, that fully embraces the beauty of its setting. The elegant interplay of openness and intention defines this luxury interior, where each curated space is both individually celebrated and seamlessly connected.





***"The open-plan layout of the home allowed for intentional design consistency, whilst still allowing for a feature to be added to each space unique to the aesthetic, and homeowner's needs".***

***The kitchen features streamlined, sleek black cabinetry that seamlessly integrates high-end appliances. Sleek bronze glass doors seamlessly integrate vertical LED lighting, adds a warm ambience, and enhanced depth.***

The home embraces a nature-inspired palette, in textured shades of green blended with warm earthy colours that sets a grounding backdrop to its refined, modern contemporary interior. Intricately detailed textures, visually intriguing patterns, and natural materials have been thoughtfully layered against light and plain surfaces. Together these elements create a modern interior that feels warm, cohesive, and effortlessly elegant. Throughout, the home embodies a clean-lined aesthetic and considered layered lighting. Custom sourced and curated artwork by OLALA allows the homeowner's personality to shine through, weaving a narrative that transforms the luxury interior into a deeply personal sanctuary.

The open-plan living space features a striking rich green wallcovering that mimics a fresh bamboo screen in horizontal bands, bringing a tranquil vitality with subtle texture and depth. Complemented by a more understated cream base wallpaper with vertical black lines flanked by aged gold dots, offers balanced contrast.

The kitchen island's top featuring soft grey veins is a light contrast against the black cabinetry, adds a sense of rhythm and movement and timeless elegance. Echoed on one side of the island's fluted base and adjacent wall, it creates a perfect backdrop for horizontal wooden shelving and zebra blinds. Integrated PITT cooking gas burners suited to the ultra-modern aesthetic of the kitchen is complemented by the refined presence of counter height chairs - their outer back is intricately woven in an olive bouclé outlined in gold, is paired with a neutral velvet inner seat that adds a tailored, tactile finish combining functionality with style. A brass stem pendant with smoked glass globes adds a luminous sculptural presence to the space.







The dining space is both elegant and inviting - a richly layered palette of deep olive and moss green ground the space against the organic warmth of wood and neutral tones.

The circular wooden tabletop and tailored dining chairs in a soft corduroy invite connection while introducing refined texture to the setting.

A sleek gold pendulum pendant is a focal point of interest, blending elegance and a warm ambience to the space.





The TV lounge offers a sense of adventure and elegance anchored by an olive-green modular sofa in a soft, textured fabric, livened by an eccentric mix of scatter cushions in leopard print and nature-inspired patterns. The inclusion of a custom curated playful ostrich painting reflects the homeowner's love of Africa.

A statement coffee table with a reflective gold cluster bubble base and swirling marble top adds sculptural elegance and a sense of movement.

The modern floating plasma unit in a matt dark grey finish with slatted doors against a rich grain wooden backdrop offers a striking interplay of contrast and cohesion. Soft underlighting adds a warming ambience.



*A hand-knotted wool rug in a linear design adds visual intrigue and a calming, comforting warmth.*

*The consistent use of green, created a signature colour thread in each curated zone.*



The guest WC exudes a sophisticated chic elegance with richly layered textures, balanced by an inviting, warm ambience. A wallcovering features a unique emboss that offers a sense of woven comfort. Streaks of horizontal, earth-inspired colours are set against a soft, neutral base, a perfect backdrop for two wildlife artworks, adds depth and visual intrigue. Sleek black and brass cylindrical pendants offer an elegant sculptural presence - reflecting in a large, semi-circular mirror enhances both light and spatial perception to the space.





## THE MASTER SUITE IS A LAYERED EXPRESSION OF COMFORT AND ELEGANCE

OLALA designed the master suite as a serene stylish sanctuary. The considered blend of colour, texture, and material offer a tactile and emotionally connected experience. An interplay of geometric textures enrich the space with visual depth and tactile comfort. The cohesive linear design thread is pulled through from the panel design headboard, smart storage ottoman, and woollen knit throw, adding a sense of rhythm and a refined visual continuity to the space.



*A tub chair upholstered in a rich texture of nature-inspired variations offers a warm, organic prescence.*



The dressing room is a blend of quality craftsmanship and meticulous design clean lines, smoked glass, seamless integrated lighting and a flawless combination of warm wood tones and matte black finishes elevates the daily dressing routine with visual clarity and effortless ease.



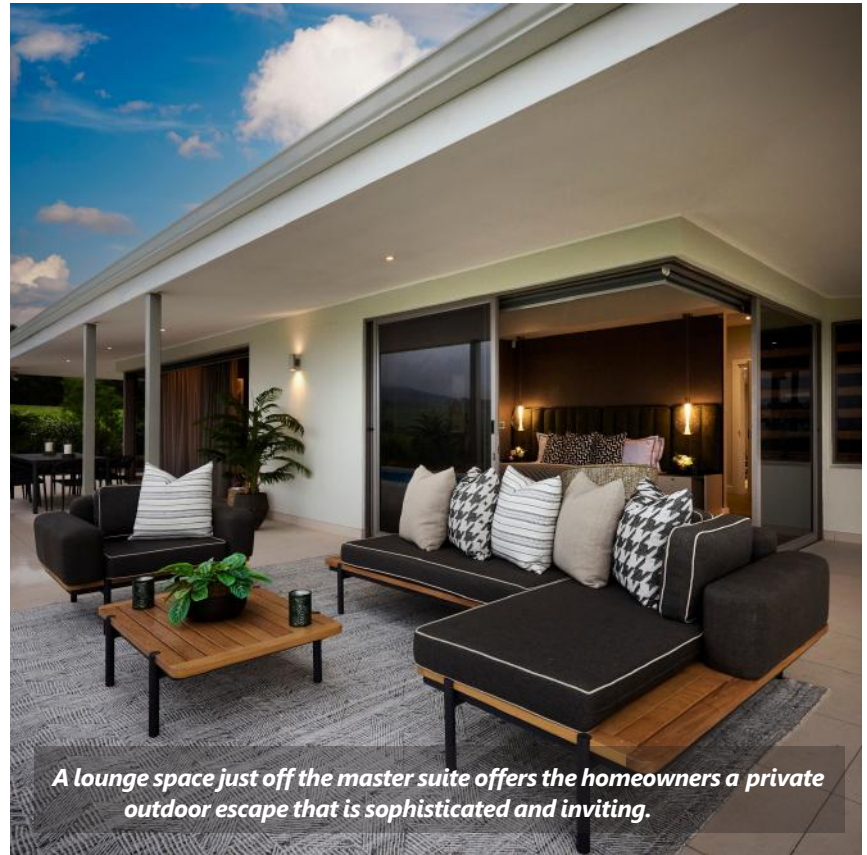




*Elegant glass balloon pendants with a distinctive central funnel add a sculptural presence of ambient illumination.*

An elegant extension of the master suite, OLALA designed a space that is sophisticated and inviting - a curated outdoor lounge provides a serene retreat for the homeowners to connect and relax, embracing pastureland views with a morning coffee, or nightcap.

Deep charcoal cushioning outlined by a crisp white piping is softened by a mix of black, grey, white, and neutral scatter cushions that offset against the warmth of a timber frame and table. The scatters chevron pattern and geometric stripes introduce texture and visual rhythm, whilst an outdoor rug defined by a linear geometric weave, grounds the space with tactile softness.



*A lounge space just off the master suite offers the homeowners a private outdoor escape that is sophisticated and inviting.*



A luxurious blend of modern and classic, the master en-suite embodies spatial harmony. Against a white base, a combination of fluted wood, luxurious gold-vein marble, clear glass balloon pendants and horizontal zebra blinds offer a harmonious blend of texture and clean-lined elegance.



OLALA INTERIORS  
CURATED BY DESIGN

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# WHERE NATURE MEETS MODERN LIVING

## Winter at The Woods Elaleni

**A**S WINTER SETTLES OVER KwaZulu-Natal's North Coast and life adopts a gentler pace, The Woods Elaleni offers a different kind of luxury, one grounded in warmth, connection, and intentional living. Set within the sought-after Elaleni Coastal Forest Estate in Salt Rock, this contemporary lifestyle development brings together nature, design, and modern convenience in perfect harmony.

Morning light filters through expansive glass doors, illuminating interiors layered with natural timber, stone, linen, and earthy finishes. Crisp winter air drifts through private gardens and spacious patios, while the surrounding coastal forest

creates a sense of calm and restoration. At The Woods, winter is not simply a season, it is an experience to be savoured.

Following the remarkable success of Phase 1, which sold out before officially launching, The Woods has quickly become one of the North Coast's most desirable residential addresses. The newly released Phase 2 offers a limited collection of beautifully designed two- and three-bedroom homes, presenting buyers with an opportunity to invest in secure estate living within one of South Africa's fastest-growing lifestyle destinations.

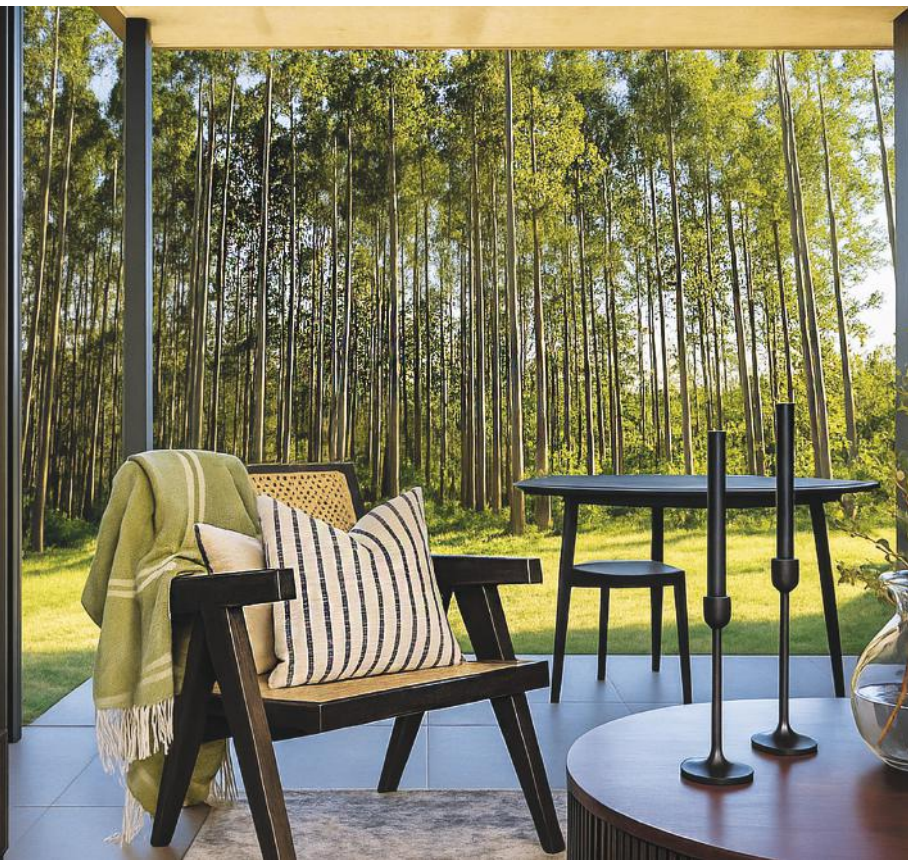
Prices currently start from approximately R3.08 million for two-bedroom homes and R3.85 million for three-bedroom homes, with selected freestanding units reaching R4.25 million, depending on size and positioning.

Designed by Bloc Architects in collaboration with Nichol Projects, The Woods combines contemporary architecture with natural materials and elevated finishes. Buyers can choose between freestanding and semi-detached homes, all thoughtfully positioned to maximise privacy, natural light, and seamless indoor-outdoor living. Features include private gardens, covered patios, Smeg appliances, and air-conditioned bedrooms, enhancing everyday comfort.

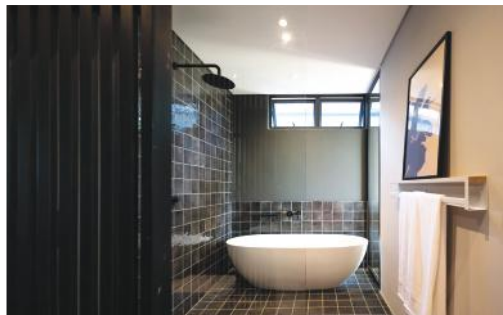
Beyond the homes themselves, residents enjoy access to an exceptional lifestyle offering. Within The Woods, homeowners have exclusive use of a private clubhouse featuring a swimming pool, firepit, entertainment area, and landscaped green spaces.

### As part of the greater Elaleni Estate, residents also enjoy access to:

- The Harvest Barn lifestyle hub, featuring a restaurant, coffee roastery, gym, spa, and children's play area.
- The exclusive Elaleni Beach Club on Salt Rock Beach.
- Forest walking trails, boardwalks, and nature-immersed clubhouse spaces.
- Padel and tennis courts.
- A leisure centre and business centre.
- Community vegetable gardens and edible landscapes throughout the estate.







One of Elaleni's most distinctive features is its connection to nature and community. Herbs, avocados, lemons, pineapples, and seasonal fruits grow throughout the estate, encouraging residents to embrace a slower, more mindful way of living. It is an environment centred on wellbeing, family connection, and outdoor living.

The estate's prime North Coast location further enhances its appeal. Positioned just minutes from Ballito and close to leading schools, boutique shopping destinations, renowned restaurants, vibrant markets, and family attractions such as Sugar Rush Park and The Litchi Orchard, Elaleni offers both convenience and exclusivity.

For investors, The Woods presents a compelling opportunity within a high-growth residential node. The combination of secure estate living, premium amenities, strong rental demand, and ongoing development along the North Coast positions the estate as both a lifestyle sanctuary and a sound long-term investment. Rental projections currently range between approximately R23,000 and R27,000 per month, further strengthening its appeal.

More than simply a place to live, The Woods Elaleni represents a lifestyle shaped by connection, intentionality, and modern coastal living. This winter, it offers a rare opportunity to slow down, reconnect with nature, and invest in a home designed around the way people truly want to live.

For more information or to arrange a viewing, visit The Woods Elaleni.



**THEWOODS.**  
ELALeni

For more information or visuals, please contact Janna Strang on [janna@rainmakermarketing.co.za](mailto:janna@rainmakermarketing.co.za) / 082 551 3865 or email Nokuphila Zungu on [pr@rainmakermarketing.co.za](mailto:pr@rainmakermarketing.co.za)





# FIVE GENERATIONS, FIVE RULEBOOKS

## WHAT THE PROPERTY INDUSTRY KEEPS GETTING WRONG

Words: Stefan Botha



**S**TRATEGIC RESEARCH IS THE SINGLE BIGGEST determinant of whether a property development/estate succeeds or struggles. I've said this for years and I'll keep saying it, because the property industry still underinvests in the upfront work that shapes everything that comes after. When we do research for developers, we're looking at the full picture: location fundamentals, product mix, depth of demand, pricing thresholds, competitor stock, absorption trajectories. That's the science of getting the product right before a single brick is laid.

But there's a layer that most research misses, and it's becoming the most important one. Which generation are you actually targeting, and what are they looking for? That has to be the secret sauce of any serious market research exercise, and right now it's almost completely absent from the conversation.

Here's the thing. Everyone is talking about the new generations. The baby boomers are moaning about millennials. The millennials are moaning about Gen Z. Nobody is sitting down in the property space and doing the actual analytical work to understand what these generational shifts mean for buyer behaviour, product design, and pricing strategy. The moment the industry starts taking this seriously, it's going to fundamentally change how products are conceptualised, launched, and sold. The developers who get there first will have an enormous advantage over the ones still building for a generic buyer profile that no longer exists.

Because right now, the South African property industry has five generations in the market at the same time, each operating off a completely different rulebook. The problem isn't that one generation is right and the others are wrong. The problem is that most developers and marketers are still designing, pricing, and selling as if everyone thinks the way the baby boomers did.



*Let me walk you through what's actually happening.*

## **THE BABY BOOMERS:**

### **The Cash Buyers Nobody Is Marketing To**

Globally, baby boomers have just reclaimed the top spot as the largest generation of home buyers. In the United States, boomers now account for 42% of all home buyers, up from a few years ago when everyone assumed millennials would dominate the market indefinitely. More striking is how they're buying. Roughly half of older boomers and 40% of younger boomers are purchasing homes entirely in cash, bypassing financing altogether.

In South Africa, the pattern is similar at the top end of the market. Boomers are the generation with equity, with time, and increasingly with a very specific set of needs: proximity to family, low maintenance, healthcare access, and a lifestyle that doesn't require them to manage a large garden they no longer want. They're the driving force behind much of the sectional title and lifestyle estate demand in the Western Cape and along the KZN North Coast.

Here's what developers are getting wrong: they keep building retirement stock that looks like retirement stock. Boomers today don't want to feel old. They want a lock-up-and-go apartment in a vibrant mixed-use precinct, or a stand in a lifestyle estate where they can walk to a restaurant. They want to downsize their maintenance, not their lifestyle. The product that wins with this generation isn't sold as retirement living. It's sold as freedom.

## **GEN X:**

### **The Quiet Powerhouse**

Gen X is the most overlooked generation in property commentary, and yet they're the highest earners in the market. In the US, Gen X buyers have the highest median household income of any cohort, and they're buying the largest homes. In South Africa, Gen X is the sandwich generation carrying mortgages, school fees, aging parents, and often funding their own children's deposits.

This is the generation that still believes in property as the core of their wealth strategy, but they're increasingly pragmatic about it. They're the ones doing multigenerational home purchases at the highest rate globally, buying homes that can accommodate aging parents or adult children who haven't yet moved out. They're the ones using property equity to help their kids into the market.

For developers, Gen X is the generation that will pay a premium for thoughtful design, quality finishes, and location that works for a complicated life. They're not buying fantasy. They're buying function with a long-term view.

## **THE MILLENNIALS:**

### **Later, Smarter, and Less Conventional**

Here's the thing about millennials: the narrative that they can't or won't buy property is lazy and wrong. In South Africa, buyers under 35 now account for nearly a third of all residential property transactions, and 69% of first-time home loan applicants are under 35. BetterBond's data shows millennials are spending an average of R1.25 million on a home purchase, and that number is rising.

What has changed isn't whether they buy. It's how they buy and what they prioritise. The median age of first-time home buyers in the US has hit an all-time high of 40 years old. Millennials are entering the market later because they're delaying the life milestones that used to anchor property purchases, marriage, children, career stability. But when they do enter, they're doing it strategically.

The data tells the story. A trend called "houses before spouses" is now mainstream, with the number of South African property purchases made jointly with a spouse dropping from 34% to 27% over the past decade. Women now own nearly 60% of South African residential housing stock. Joint bond applications between friends, rather than partners, are rising. This is a generation that treats property as an asset first and an emotional purchase second.

And here's where it gets interesting: millennials are increasingly rentvesting. They're buying investment stock in nodes with good yields while renting in the nodes they actually want to live in. It's a strategy that previous generations would have considered bizarre. For millennials, it's arithmetic.

## **GEN Z:**

### **The Generation Everyone Misreads**

This is where most of the commentary falls apart. The common narrative is that Gen Z are renters who will never own property. The data says otherwise. Globally, 97% of Gen Z say they want to own a home someday. In South Africa, Gen Z buyers are actually outspending younger millennials on average, with BetterBond data showing Gen Z purchases averaging R1.5 million, up nearly 7% year on year. They're entering the market later, yes, but when they enter, they're informed, they're intentional, and they're asking questions previous generations didn't think to ask.

The real shift is in what they're buying and why. Gen Z is the first generation to treat sustainability as a non-negotiable rather than a premium feature. They're not asking whether a development has solar and backup power as a nice-to-have. They're asking because they've lived through load-shedding, they've watched electricity tariffs climb year after year, and they've calculated that a home with energy independence is a home that holds its value. It's not idealism. It's a practical hedge.



They're also redefining what ownership looks like. Co-buying with friends, house hacking by buying a duplex and renting out half, fractional ownership of investment stock, these are all strategies that Gen Z is adopting faster than any generation before them. And they're doing it with digital tools that make the entire process look different from the one their parents used.

For developers, the Gen Z buyer is the one who will walk away from a beautiful show house if the sales process isn't digital, transparent, and fast. They want to reserve online. They want to see the data. They want the sales agent to be a consultant, not a closer.

## **GEN ALPHA: The Generation We Should Already Be Building For**

Gen Alpha, born roughly between 2012 and 2024, are still children. The oldest of them will only enter the property market meaningfully in the 2030s. But if there's one lesson from watching Gen Z catch the industry off guard, it's that we should be paying attention to Gen Alpha now, not in ten years.

What do we know about them? They are the first generation growing up with AI as a default tool rather than a novelty. They are more privacy-conscious than Gen Z, more sceptical of marketing, and more comfortable navigating fully digital environments. They're being raised by millennial parents who themselves are rewriting the property rulebook, which means Gen Alpha's baseline assumption about property will be fundamentally different from any generation before them.

My prediction is this: Gen Alpha will be the first generation that doesn't see the family home as the primary asset of adulthood at all. They'll grow up

watching their parents rentvest, co-buy, and build property portfolios rather than single homes. They'll inherit a mental model where property is a financial instrument first and a lifestyle choice second. That's going to reshape everything from how developments are launched to how estate agents are trained.

## ***What This Actually Means***

The reality is that most property businesses are still optimising for a buyer who no longer exists. The typical family buying a four-bedroom home in a quiet suburb with a 20-year bond is now a minority segment. The fastest-growing segments are single female buyers, co-buyers, rentvestors, cash-buying empty nesters, and sustainability-driven first-timers who care more about the solar yield than the tile finish.

If you're a developer sitting with unsold stock and you can't figure out why, the question isn't whether the market is soft. The question is which generation you designed your product for, and whether that generation is actually in the market for what you built.

The opportunity is enormous, but it requires developers and marketers to stop treating the buyer as a single archetype and start building for the actual psychology of each generation. The product for a Gen X multigenerational family isn't the product for a Gen Z rentvestor. The sales process that closes a cash-buying boomer isn't the sales process that converts a millennial joint-bond couple. The marketing that reaches a Gen Alpha in 2032 isn't going to look anything like what we're doing today.

Five generations, five rulebooks, one market. The industry's job is to stop pretending they're all reading the same book.





# The choice is yours at **EAT STREET**

Eat Street features an array of fine restaurants in a lively street scene setting, offering everything from pub fare to fine dining. With exclusive lunch menus, sundowner specials from 4pm - 6pm daily, DJs on Thursday to Saturday evenings, live musicians on weekends and a welcoming atmosphere, Eat Street is the destination of choice for those seeking exceptional food in a relaxed, stylish environment.

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# THE VIEW FROM HERE

Of all the choices an architect makes, the window may be the most revealing. It is, quite literally, how a home looks at the world.

**S**TAND IN ANY ROOM AND LOOK AT THE WINDOW. Not through it: at it. Notice its proportions, its placement, the way it frames the light. Notice whether it feels like a polite gesture towards the outside world or a confident embrace of it. Notice whether it interrupts the wall or completes it. The window, more than any other architectural element, tells you what a building thinks about its relationship to everything beyond its walls.

For centuries, the window was an apology: a small concession to light and air, hemmed in by structural necessity and the limits of available materials. Walls did the serious work; windows were what you punched through them when you had to. Even today, in much of the world, this thinking persists. A view is treated as a luxury rather than a right; the outside world held at arm's length by frames, mullions, and the timid sizing of an industry that has not quite caught up to what's possible.

But on the KZN North Coast (where the Indian Ocean is the most spectacular feature any home could ever hope to face), that old thinking simply will not do. Here, the question is not whether to let the view in: it is how completely

you can dissolve the barrier between the house and the horizon. And that is a question of engineering as much as it is of design.

This is where NSG (North Shore Group) has quietly redefined what's possible. Their work in architectural glass and precision-engineered aluminium represents a fundamental shift in how we think about the window itself.

Not as a hole in the wall, but as the wall. Not as a frame around the view, but as an act of generosity towards it. Frameless glass panels that rise from floor to ceiling without visible support; sliding systems that disappear into pockets so completely you forget they exist; structural glazing that holds itself up and lets nothing else get in the way. These are not windows in the traditional sense. They are decisions about how to live.

Consider what a great window actually offers. It is not just light, though the quality of natural light in a well-glazed room is transformative (skin looks better, food tastes better, mornings feel longer and more luxurious). It is not just view, though there is something profoundly settling about being able to see weather coming in off the sea, or watch the dolphins move along the swells at breakfast. It is the sense of being connected: to the elements, to the seasons, to the world. A great window keeps you in conversation with everything that matters.

What NSG brings to this conversation is the rare ability to deliver on the vision without compromise. Founded by Deon Olivier and headquartered just outside Ballito (with a Cape Town branch extending their reach), NSG designs, manufactures, and installs entirely in-house. That vertical integration matters, because the larger and more ambitious the glazing, the less margin there is for error. A frameless glass wall ten metres wide is not forgiving of imprecision; the tolerances must be exact, the engineering flawless, the installation impeccable. NSG controls every stage of that process, which is precisely why South Africa's most demanding architects and developers trust them with their most demanding projects.







There is also something quietly philosophical about NSG's approach. The company understands that the goal of great glazing is not to draw attention to itself but to make itself disappear; to let the view, the light, and the experience of the room take centre stage. The best window, in this thinking, is the one you stop noticing. The one that becomes simply the way the house meets the world.

So look again at the window. Not through it... At it. Ask yourself what it says about the home it belongs to, and about the people who chose it. On the KZN North Coast, more and more, the answer is the same: an honest, confident statement that the view deserves nothing less than everything.

Discover NSG's architectural glass and aluminium solutions at  
[www.nsgroup.co.za](http://www.nsgroup.co.za)

# WHERE THE RHYTHM OF THE OCEAN SETS THE PACE

**P**ERCHED ABOVE THE TIDAL POOLS and golden curve of Thompsons Bay, Sala Beach House is a sanctuary where stillness is savoured, and wellbeing is woven into the rhythm of daily life.

From the moment you step into this exclusive beach house and spa, you're enveloped in a world of tranquillity, a sense of calm.

With just ten rooms, Sala was designed as a private coastal house. With calm interiors and thoughtful details, it's a space designed for rest, at a slower pace, away from the busyness of life.

From delicious locally sourced cuisine, that is thoughtfully prepared, to indulging in luxurious spa treatments that are personalised and unhurried, everything at Sala is about, pause, deep rest and a reconnection with oneself in an oasis of serenity.

As the seasons shift this time of year, autumn on the KZN coast reveals its quiet magic: sun-drenched days perfect for ocean swims, and cooler evenings spent fireside, watching the sun melt into the horizon in hues of terracotta and gold.

At the essence of this ultimate KwaZulu Natal coastal gem is tranquillity and wellness and Sala has curated a Wellness Retreat Collection which invites you to pause, soften and return to yourself held by the healing energy of the Indian Ocean and the understated elegance of their five-star coastal hideaway.

Each retreat blends gentle movement, soulful workshops, nourishing cuisine, and spacious time to simply be. These experiences are designed to meet you exactly where you are and guide you home to yourself.

Their upcoming Salt & Soul retreat in July is one such retreat - an immersion in the healing rhythm of the sea. Stretching over six days, Salt & Soul weaves yoga, breathwork, creativity, ocean adventures and meaningful rituals into a journey that is both energising and deeply grounding.

Drawing from the full 6-day programme (including sunrise yoga, whale watching, surf lessons, creative workshops, breathwork, fire ceremonies and more), Salt & Soul











is designed to reconnect you with joy, vitality and soulful presence.

This intimate retreat is limited to a small number of guests and invites deep rest, ocean immersion, and meaningful reconnection.

Embrace Barefoot Elegance and step into a space that seamlessly blends contemporary sophistication with coastal beauty.

75 Ocean Drive, Thompson's Bay, Shaka's Rock, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa  
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# IF YOU DON'T PICK IT UP, IT'LL STOP CALLING YOU

MANU GRACE

Words: Dan Charles

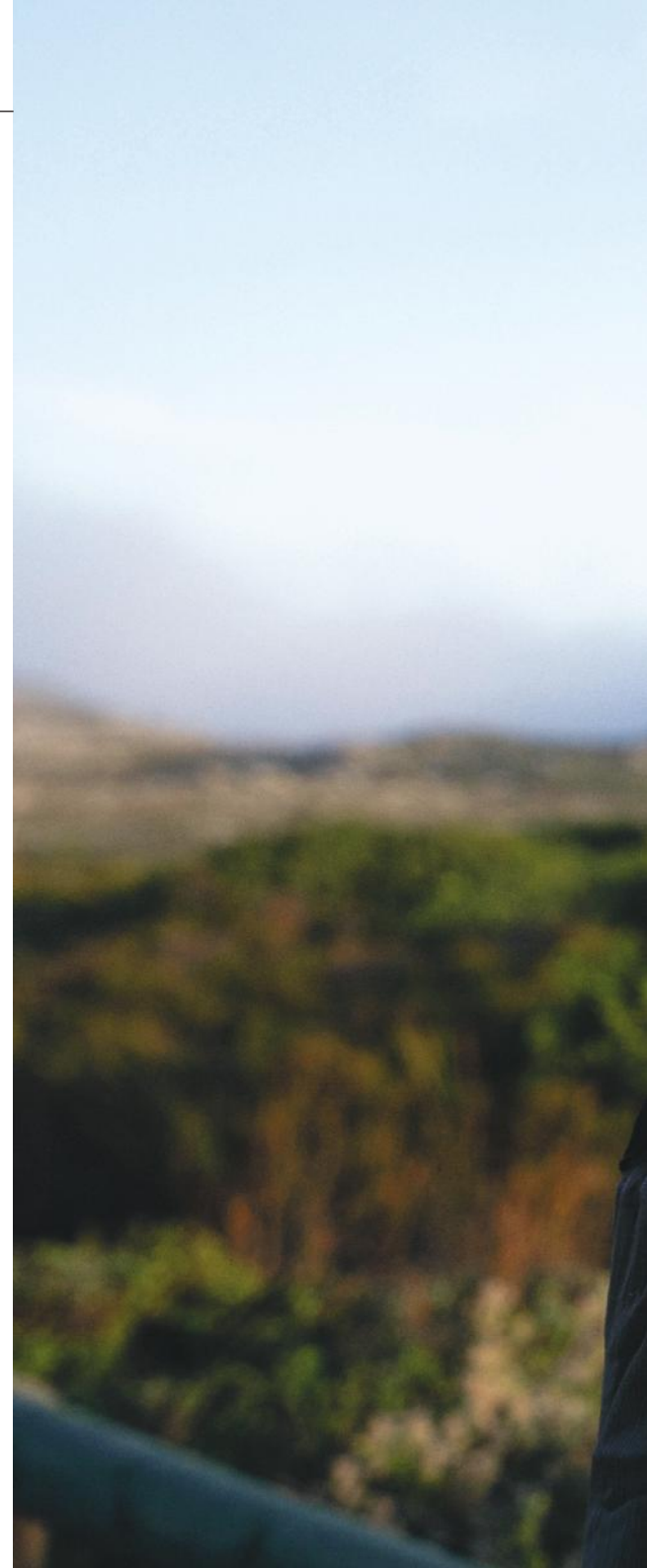
Photos: Tao Farren-Hefer

Akira Tree

**“I'M SO BORED WITH MYSELF!”** complains Manu Grace almost as soon as we start our conversation. She's talking to me from her bedroom-studio in London, where she has been painstakingly watching herself over and over again while editing footage that had just been sent of her recent performance in Berlin - one of the first performances that she's given in a very long time. She tells me that it's dangerous to delve straight into the footage because it can quickly tarnish the memory of how it felt to actually play her songs and share them with a room full of people. I imagine it must be similar to what happens to your brain when you repeat a word so many times that it starts to lose all of its meaning. I imagine that, after so many years without sharing any new music, Manu wants to hold on tightly to the meaning she has found in her songs again.

*In 2020, Manu released **No Room For Error** - a sonically rich travelogue of the feelings of desire and disappointment evoked from a short-lived romance across Europe. The first single, **Two Weeks**, premiered live on Zane Lowe's Beats 1 radio show on Apple Music, and it received a glowing reception from a slew of sweet, soft-hearted listeners who were immediately drawn to her unabashedly vulnerable and sensitive approach to songcraft.*

Shows were then starting to get booked with bigger and more acclaimed artists like Maya Hawke (if you don't know her music, you might know her from a little show that used to be on Netflix called *Stranger Things*) and the legendary John Cale, of the Velvet Underground. To borrow a famous quote from Cameron Crowe's classic coming-of-age film *Almost Famous*, it was “all happening” during that time.















A fulfilling career as a songsmith awaited Manu Grace, but it was halted by the unforeseeable. While the world was thrust into lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic, Manu continued to write new material to follow up her last EP with her frequent collaborators Ross Dorkin and Rob Brink. But the songs were beginning to suffer. She was working in Cape Town at the time, while Ross and Rob were based in London and Berlin, respectively, and the distance between the three began to undermine their collaboration. The sharing of files back and forth began to resemble what Manu describes as the road-trip game, where each person draws a part of a figure without seeing what came before. “Somebody would open the project and add some stuff as a placeholder idea. Then the next person opens up the project, doesn't know where the idea was supposed to go, but they pick it up and do something,” she explains. “It was a little bit bonkers.”

***Compared to how they worked together on No Room For Error - ten days together in Berlin with everyone in the same room, creative decisions feeling unanimous and aligned - the remote process left the songs feeling unresolved and uncertain of what they wanted to be. And so they were put aside.***

Manu had no intention of abandoning those songs, but after the remote sessions with Ross and Rob, the world around her soon became a heavier and heavier place to live in. Her father died. And then her grandmother. And this was all within a time when the world had just begun to be inundated with horrific footage of the genocide in Gaza. The air was rife with grief - for those whom she loved and for those who had everything that they had loved violently taken away from them. It made it hard to sing pop songs, and so performing became almost impossible. She tried a few times but found that the vulnerability of her songs, combined with her own raw emotional state, was too much to bear.

“To be so vulnerable when you are so vulnerable - I found it really hard,” she says quietly. “There was a period where it was like, ‘You just need to do your job; it’s okay, just keep posting.’ And then it was like, ‘What the fuck am I making noise about my silly little pop songs for? Who do I think I am?’”

Grief combined with the profound difficulty of making noise about pop songs during a period of global atrocity paralyzed her with questions of relevance. The songs that had been lingering on her hard drive felt like they were from another lifetime, and the person who sang them became unrecognizable to her. “Who was that who made those songs?” she recalls thinking. “There’s no way I can present them or relate to them.”

When the weight of tragedy - whether it is personal or existential - tethers itself to you, you have no choice but to carry it for a while. So often, we think we have to carry it alone, and that is how tragedy and grief can quickly buckle our knees and send us plummeting into the depths of immense sorrow. It can cause our hearts to wither into emotional atrophy while we struggle against it, making it yet another mournful weight to carry rather than something that helps with all the other carrying. Manu is the kind of songwriter who is naturally compelled to put her whole heart into her craft, and so, in the depths of that all-consuming sorrow, it is no wonder that she decided that she had to put down her songs - the many pieces of her heart - to ease the load.

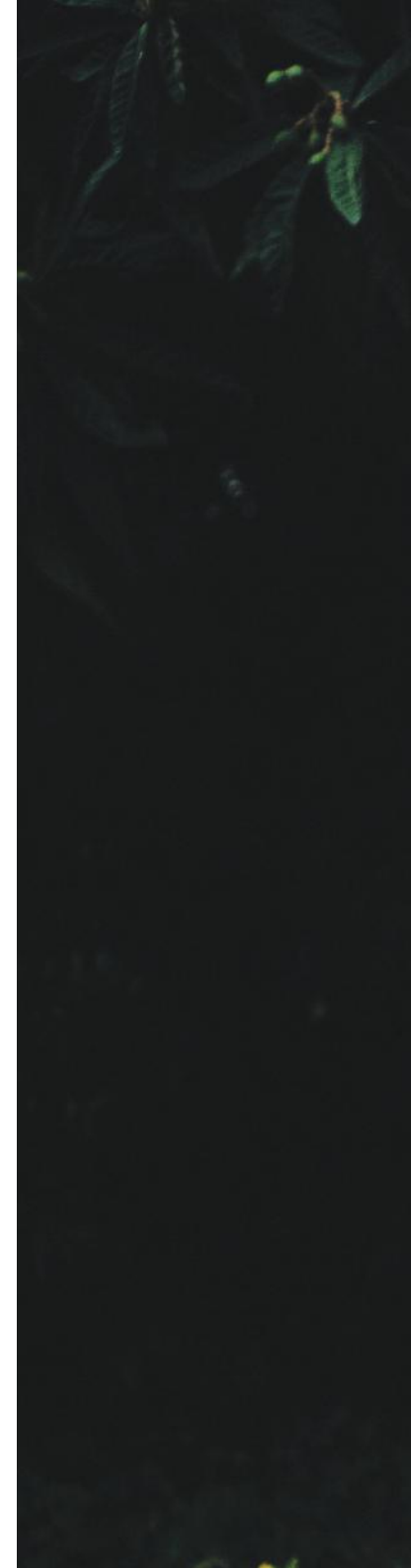
"It's like, surely you have to find other things that make life on earth kind of manageable?" she recalls asking herself. "I guess I did in that period of not having had music at the center of my universe, which was kind of the first time that had ever happened. But it was really scary. I did find other things to be joyful about, but everything felt so flat. I was so miserable."

She knew she wasn't well after returning home from some traveling. Travel is something Manu has always found immense joy in - it's what has inspired much of the music in *No Room For Error* and much of her work - but coming back left her with an unrecognizable emptiness that frightened her. Her heart, in its atrophy, could no longer feel joy and wonder as it used to.

"I know it sounds quite dramatic, and I don't really know how to put it without sounding - I don't know..." she says, a bit hesitantly. "Life's really not interesting enough without it."

*While visiting her mother in Scarborough, she confided this feeling to her mother. Her mother is a writer, so she knows about the pitfalls of a life that revolves around making art and the damage that can result from abandoning it. What her mother told her read both as guidance and almost as a warning: "If you don't pick it up, it'll stop calling you."*

When she was younger, Manu and her mother would spend a lot of time visiting a children's home before her younger brother came to live with them. There was a room there that was full of tiny babies that the staff had prohibited them from picking up because, once they were put back down, they would begin to cry. "I feel so deeply affected by that," she tells me. "If you put a kid down for long enough for it to stop crying, it just stops asking for help or love."













The process of picking her craft back up was not particularly romantic or thrilling. It began, simply, with a checklist. When Manu returned to London, they got strict with themselves and, so every day the checklist had to be completed: play an instrument, write something, and sing - even if only for three minutes. It was mechanical at first - like forcing yourself to eat when you have no appetite. "But slowly, slowly everything started to thaw out," she explains. "And it worked - just actually forcing yourself to show up and do the thing." Eventually, music became something that no longer felt forced. Ideas were streaming in, and everything felt exciting again. New songs were being written.

Although new ideas were calling Manu back to the studio, the old songs had also started to cry out for her - less like newborns, more like ghosts that had grown tired of haunting her hard drive and her head and wished to be exercised. And they were being really naggy about it.

*"Maybe I'm giving away my roots a little bit too much - I'm going to sound terribly Scarborough now - but they were taking up so much spiritual space; it's almost like they had to be purged," she says. "So I had to honor the songs and let them live."*

This is why Manu is back in her studio now, editing footage of herself performing a song that had long since cried for her after being laid down in the cradle of her hard drive for years. The song is called Oh Man, I've Done It Again and is the title track of her latest EP, set to be released later this year. It is an EP that mostly consists of songs she never finished and sees Manu making peace with the time she has lost after abandoning these pieces of her old self, making them part of who she is today. The EP closes with one of the first new songs that she had written in quite some time, and it ends with the words:

*"I've never kept anything as private as I have this grief. I've never known numbness to feel like a sigh of relief. I've never known someone whose wordlessness felt quite so deep. Oh, how am I to find the words for something so unique?"*

It is often impossible to find the words. It is often, more so, to find the right music to convey them. But sometimes they themselves can find their way to you. They can cry for you. But only if you pick them up.

MANU GRACE  
@\_manugrace





# DECODING SKIN SPAN & LIFE SPAN

## An Interview with Dr. Maureen Allem and Victor Snyders

**F**EW INDUSTRIES HAVE evolved as dramatically over the past two decades as aesthetics, skincare and wellness. At the forefront of that transformation in South Africa is Skin Renewal, founded by Dr Maureen Allem and Victor Snyders in 2005.

What began as a single clinic has grown into a nationally recognised brand. By combining medical science, advanced technology and a holistic approach to wellbeing, the group has built a reputation for innovation in anti-ageing, skincare and regenerative wellness.

Dr Allem's medical expertise and passion for aesthetic healthcare, together with Victor Snyders' strategic business vision, have helped shape an industry that today is as much about confidence, preventative care and overall wellness as it is about appearance.

In this exclusive Q&A, Life & Style spoke to the founders about the journey behind the brand, the changing face of aesthetic medicine, the latest trends in skincare and wellness, and why more people than ever are embracing a proactive approach to looking and feeling their best.

### DR. MAUREEN ALLEM

**What inspired your shift from hospital ER work to pioneering aesthetic medicine in South Africa, and how did training with Dr Koen de Boulle in Belgium shape your approach to Botox and fillers?**

I found emergency medicine deeply rewarding for its immediacy and problem-solving, but it fundamentally focuses on crisis management. My perspective shifted toward a proactive model of health: I wanted to help people maximise both their life span and their skin span, ensuring that the health, vitality, and structural integrity of their skin aligns with a long, vibrant life. Aesthetic medicine offered that exact opportunity. It combines deep

anatomy, pharmacology, and procedural precision with a sustained, long-term therapeutic relationship aimed at cellular preservation rather than just reactive treatment.

Training with Dr. Koen de Boulle in Belgium was pivotal to this philosophy. His emphasis on precise anatomical knowledge, conservative product selection, and layered, natural-looking results reinforced my core approach: do no harm, respect the unique structural blueprint of each face, and prioritise gradual refinement over dramatic, artificial change. Learning under a global master also underscored the absolute necessity of complication prevention and management. True longevity in aesthetic medicine relies on patient safety and conservative dosing; it is the cornerstone of every neuromodulator and dermal filler plan I design.

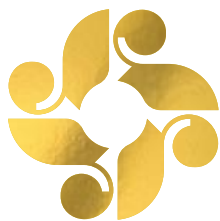
### **How do you integrate holistic factors such as hormonal imbalances and nutrition into treatment plans for acne, pigmentation and ageing skin?**

The skin is an external canvas reflecting internal cellular health and metabolic function. To truly extend a patient's skin span, you cannot treat the surface in isolation; you must look at the entire systemic environment.

**ACNE:** We look far beyond topical lesions, screening for underlying hormonal drivers such as PMOS Polyendocrine Metabolic Ovarian Syndrome or menstrual irregularities, while reviewing medication and dietary patterns that trigger systemic inflammation.

**PIGMENTATION:** We address structural triggers like UV exposure alongside internal hormonal shifts (such as melasma), combining advanced light-based and topical therapies with systemic stabilisation.





**AGEING SKIN:** The rate of structural decline is heavily dictated by metabolic health, thyroid function, sleep architecture, stress-induced cortisol levels, and nutritional state.

By designing integrated treatment plans that bridge in-clinic procedures (peels, lasers, bio-regenerative injectables) with evidence-based medical homecare and targeted lifestyle interventions, we resolve the root causes of acceleration. This ensures skin health doesn't just improve temporarily but is maintained across the patient's lifespan.

**As a trainer for Skin Renewal doctors, what key techniques do you emphasise, and why do you require at least 500 hours of hands-on learning before independent injecting?**

When training the next generation of physicians, my priorities are rigorous anatomical comprehension, sophisticated patient assessment, and conservative clinical execution. I emphasise a deep mastery of facial layers, the immediate recognition and management of vascular complications, proper rheological product selection, and strategic layering to achieve natural, age-decelerating outcomes.

The non-negotiable 500-hour hands-on requirement is strictly a matter of clinical safety and excellence. It ensures that our doctors develop the necessary procedural repetition across diverse facial shapes, ages, and skin types. This intensive training builds precise tactile judgment and the confidence to manage complex clinical scenarios calmly. Injectable therapies are not merely technical tasks; they require advanced clinical reasoning,

*"The future of non-surgical aesthetics is completely anchored in Bioregenerative Medicine and Cellular Longevity. We are moving far away from the days of simply 'over-filling' or freezing lines. The trend now is about signalling the body to heal and regenerate itself."*

Dr Maureen Allem





aesthetic intuition, and clear patient communication. Standardising this high volume of hours guarantees that patient safety and long-term tissue health remain protected across the entire Skin Renewal ecosystem.

### **You've expanded Skin Renewal to include functional anti-ageing since 2013. How has this "inside-out" philosophy influenced patient outcomes?**

Integrating functional longevity science into our practice over the past decade has completely transformed our clinical outcomes. It marked our evolution from providing short-term aesthetic fixes to orchestrating comprehensive, long-term health optimisation. By simultaneously addressing gut health, nutritional deficiencies, bio-identical hormone optimisation, metabolic efficiency, and sleep hygiene alongside advanced dermatological treatments, we have fundamentally altered the trajectory of how our patients age.

Clinically, we observe a significantly slower progression of visible aging and a much higher baseline of tissue resilience. Patients no longer just look rejuvenated; they experience a tangible upgrade in their vitality, daily energy, sleep quality, and metabolic markers. By optimising the body's internal biochemistry, the

skin responds more dynamically to our clinical procedures. This allows us to achieve far more natural, durable, and elegant results while actually reducing the frequency or intensity of more invasive interventions. We aren't just changing how patients look today; we are empowering them to thrive throughout their lifespan.

### **VICTOR SNYDERS**

#### **Coming from architecture and property development, how did that influence the design of Skin Renewal clinics?**

"In architecture, you are taught that form follows function, but in medical hospitality, form must also foster trust and healing."

Coming from a background in property development, I never viewed a clinical branch as just a commercial fit-out. I saw it as a physical manifestation of our brand's promise: safety, medical excellence, and discreet luxury.

When we designed and expanded flagship clinics like Morningside and our key Cape Town branches, my property experience influenced two main areas: Spatial Flow and Patient Discretion: Traditional medical spaces can feel cold and anxiety-inducing. We intentionally designed our clinics with a hospitality-first layout. The zoning allows for seamless, private transitions from reception to high-tech treatment rooms, ensuring patients feel secure and anonymous if they choose.

Scalable Infrastructure: Aesthetic medicine requires massive backend infrastructure with precise lighting, specific clinical grading, power backups for sensitive lasers, and sterile environments for advanced injection techniques. Having a property background meant we could structurally plan for technological growth inside the walls before the first brick was laid, ensuring our footprints in Gauteng and the Western Cape could handle decades of equipment upgrades without needing constant structural overhauls.

#### **How did Skin Renewal grow from a single clinic to more than 20 branches?**

In aesthetics, a quick acquisition strategy yields a one-time transaction. A relationship strategy yields a lifetime of skin health.

We didn't scale Skin Renewal by chasing aggressive, short-term volume. Since 2005, our growth model has been fiercely anchored in the lifetime value of the patient. If you look after the patient in front of you, the compound interest of word-of-mouth handles your acquisition.

The Multi-Disciplinary Continuity Model: We realised early on that a patient's skin journey evolves. By integrating medical doctors, advanced aesthetic therapists,



and a dedicated online skin shop ecosystem, we created a continuous loop of care. A patient might come in for a specific corrective treatment, but they stay for years because our internal systems track their progress, adapt their homecare topicals, and manage their long-term skin aging blueprint.

**Data-Driven Personalisation:** We treat every patient interaction as a relationship milestone. Our internal systems allow us to maintain highly specific patient histories across all 20+ branches. If a patient visits a clinic in Cape Town or hops over to Johannesburg for a treatment in Morningside, their clinical protocols, injection depths, and product preferences travel with them seamlessly.

### How have SEO, Google tools and AI contributed to the business?

"Technology shouldn't distance you from your patient; it should remove the friction between their concern and your expertise."

My passion for tech, search engine optimisation (SEO), and data systems has been one of our quietest but most potent competitive advantages. We didn't outsource our digital soul; we built an agile digital infrastructure in-house. **SEO and Content Dominance:** Long before digital marketing was a buzzword in SA medicine, we built Skin Renewal's digital footprint around high-utility, educational content. We optimised for user intent, making sure that when someone searched for complex dermatological conditions or advanced bioregenerative treatments, we were providing clear, medically backed answers. This organic visibility kept our acquisition costs incredibly low.

**Navigating COVID-19 and Supply Disruptions:** When the pandemic forced physical clinics to close, our deep integration with Google Tools and our existing e-commerce infrastructure saved us. We didn't have to scramble to build an online presence; our online skin shop was already robust. We instantly transitioned to digital consultations, and our backend data systems allowed us to predict inventory needs and manage supply chain bottlenecks before they caused empty shelves in our clinics.

**The AI Frontier in Patient Care:** Today, we view AI not as a replacement for human touch, but as an enhancement. By using data intelligence to analyse patient patterns and streamline operational logistics, we ensure our practitioners spend less time staring at screens and more time looking at the patient's skin.

### Why did you choose organic growth rather than franchising?

"You can franchise a business model, but you cannot franchise a clinical legacy or a medical soul."

People often ask why we didn't take the franchise route to rapidly hit 50 or 100 branches. The answer is simple: quality control in medical aesthetics is non-negotiable.

**The Risk of Franchising:** In a franchise system, the primary metric for the franchisee is almost always the bottom line. In medical aesthetics, if a franchisee cuts corners on training, uses sub-par equipment, or rushes an injection protocol to save a buck, it risks the entire clinical group's reputation. By growing 100% organically, we own the clinical standards, the training pipelines, and the culture of every single branch.



## On Balancing Medical Excellence & Business Vision

### Dr Maureen Allem

"For me, it has always been about the clinical purity of the medicine. When I transitioned from emergency medicine to aesthetics, I realised that true skin rejuvenation isn't skin-deep, it's a reflection of internal cellular health. My focus is entirely on clinical protocols, finding the most advanced bioregenerative treatments, and ensuring our doctors and medical therapists are trained to the highest possible standards.

Where the magic happens is that Victor never asks me to compromise on medical excellence for a profit margin. If a technology or an ingredient, like high-quality multi-molecular weight Hyaluronic Acid with Trehalose; is what will deliver genuine, evidence-based results, Victor figures out how to build the business infrastructure around it. Our 'Skin, Body & Health Renewal' model works because we don't treat symptoms in isolation; we look at the whole patient, from their gut health and hormonal balance to deep-tissue regeneration."

### Victor Snyders

"My role is to take Maureen's medical vision and build a scalable, predictable, and premium operational ecosystem around it. If Maureen says, 'We need to treat the patient from the inside out using integrative medicine,' my job is to figure out the logistics: how do we structure our multidisciplinary teams so that a patient moves seamlessly from a medical doctor evaluating their systemic health to an aesthetic therapist executing a precise local treatment plan? As partners, we balance each other because we respect the boundaries of our respective expertise.

Maureen protects the medical soul and clinical safety of the brand, while I protect the brand's long term sustainability, digital footprint, and market positioning. We are entirely aligned on one thing: we do not chase quick wins. Every business decision I make is designed to support the lifetime relationship Maureen's medical protocols establish with our patients."

## What trends will shape the future of aesthetics and wellness in South Africa?

### Dr Maureen Allem

We are seeing a massive shift toward advanced hybrid injectable bioregenerative solutions and treatments that utilise the body's own regenerative pathways to stimulate collagen, elastin, and deep tissue health. Furthermore, we are deeply incorporating longevity science, looking at multifunctional topical formulations that protect the skin barrier while working

at a cellular level, and pairing them with internal wellness protocols like specialised IV infusions and bio-identical hormone optimisation.

South African patients are incredibly sophisticated; they want to look naturally refreshed, not 'done,' and they want their aesthetic choices to align with a healthy, vibrant lifestyle.

To support this shift at home, we have intentionally designed our own Skin Renewal topical range to capture a critical white space in the market. The vast majority of topicals available in South Africa are standalone products, forcing patients into complex, multi-step routines to target different concerns.

We've pivoted toward advanced, multifunctional topicals that address multiple cellular pathways simultaneously. This bridges the gap between clinical treatments and home care, giving patients a streamlined but incredibly potent daily regimen that protects the skin barrier while actively driving the same regenerative outcomes we target in the clinic."

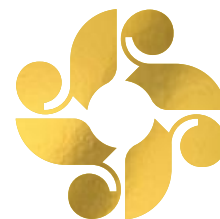
### Victor Snyders

"From a commercial and technological perspective, the next phase of growth is about Hyper-Personalisation Driven by Data and Accessibility. As these advanced bioregenerative treatments emerge, our challenge is to make them operationally seamless for the patient.

We are focusing heavily on leveraging AI and advanced digital tools to track patient journeys and treatment outcomes across all our branches with absolute precision. This ensures that a patient's long-term skin-aging blueprint is meticulously managed, whether they are visiting us in Johannesburg or Cape Town. Additionally, we are continuously expanding our integrated e-commerce ecosystem, making sure that both these highly advanced multifunctional topicals and our targeted standalone correctives prescribed in our consultation rooms are easily accessible to patients nationwide, maintaining that crucial continuity of care outside the clinic walls."

SKIN RENEWAL

skinrenewal.co.za







DISCOVER  
THE ELIXIR  
OF **you**  
*youth*

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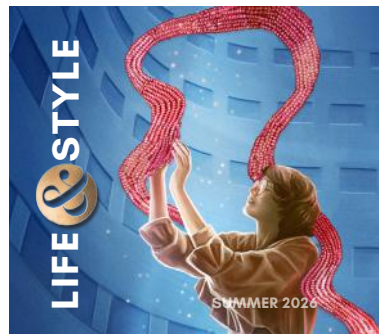
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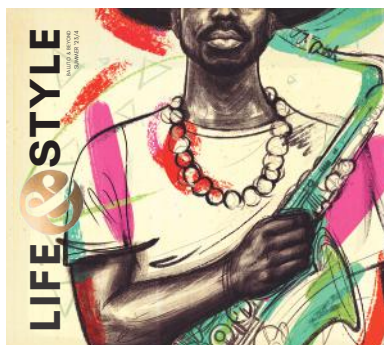
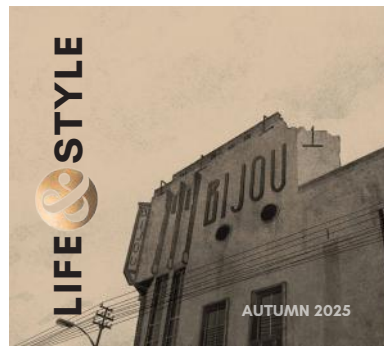


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As the day unfolds, Eat Street comes alive with energy. Glasses clink at Sundowners, laughter spills across tables, and live musicians create the soundtrack to long coastal evenings. There is a constant buzz of movement and connection, where people arrive for a quick cocktail and often end up staying for dinner, music and another round with friends.

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What makes Lifestyle Centre special is its ability to feel both energetic and effortless. It's sophisticated without being formal, lively without ever losing its warmth. Whether you're meeting friends for sundowners, enjoying live music under the lights, browsing local art or simply soaking up the atmosphere, it captures something authentic about coastal living.

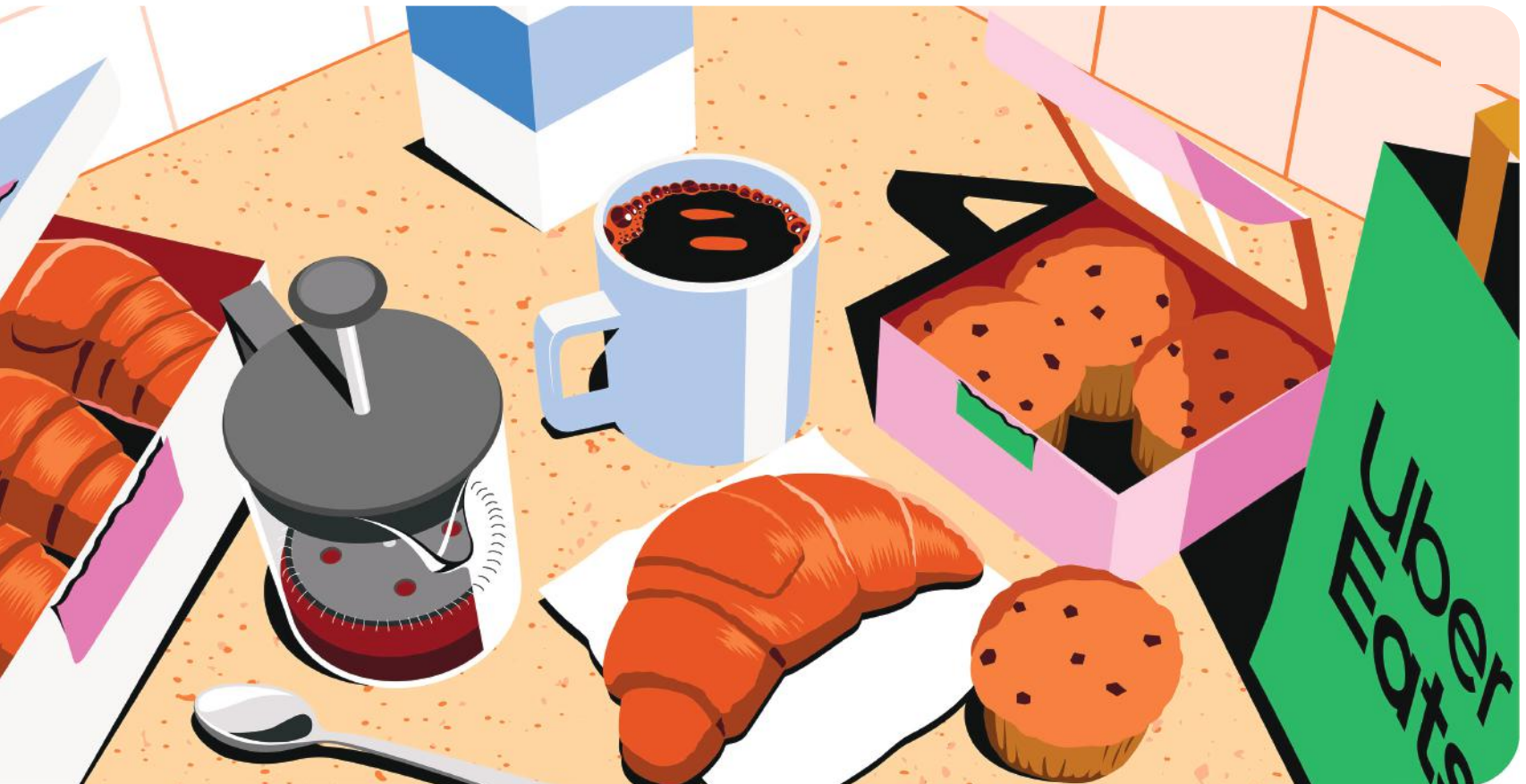


# MUTI

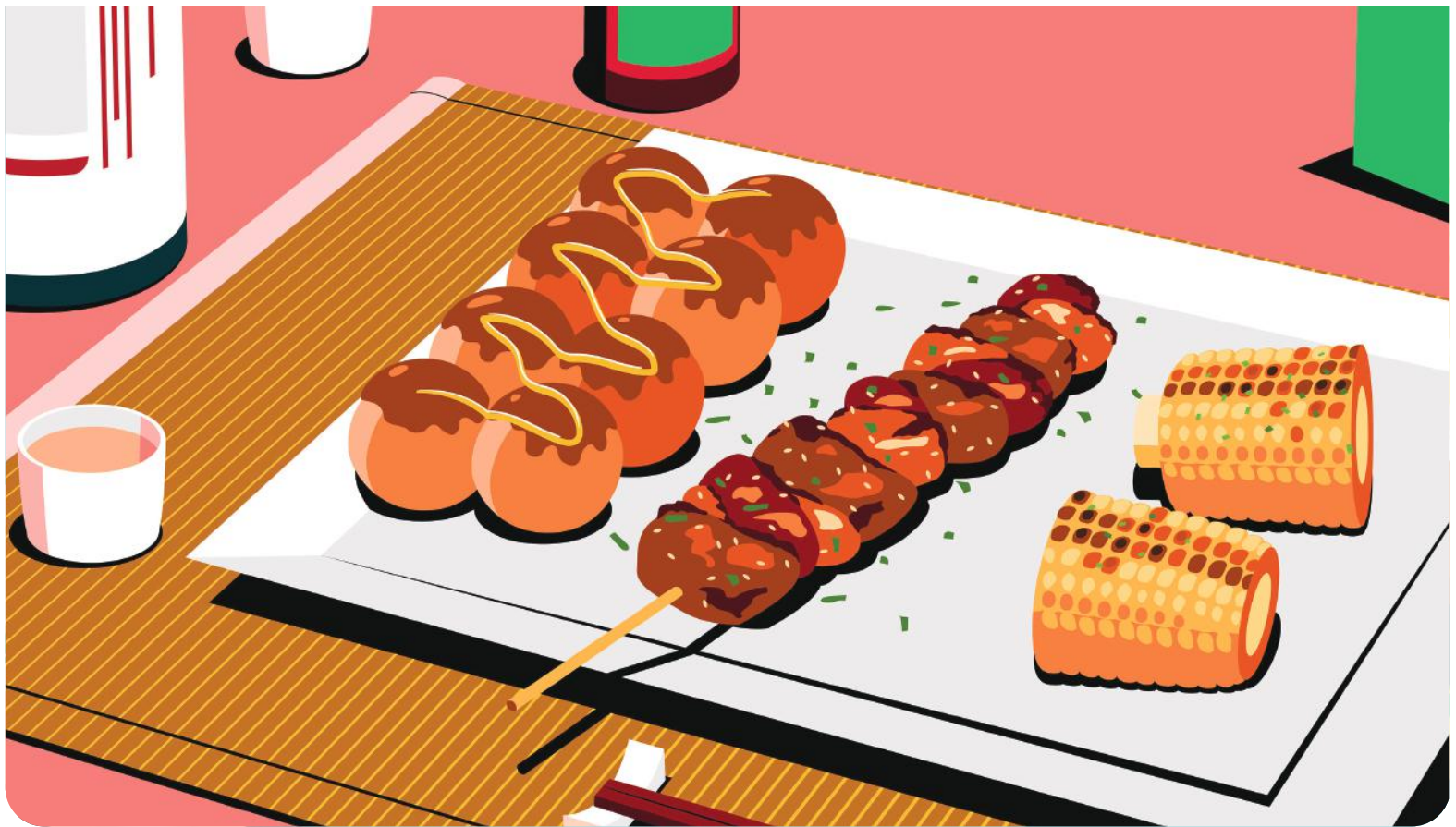
MUTI is a creative studio founded in 2011, based in the city of Cape Town, South Africa. We're a dedicated team of illustrators and designers who are passionate about producing original and inspiring artwork.

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# COMEBACK KID

## THE RETURN OF GRUMPY & RUNT

Words: Mia McCarthy

**“I’D NEVER MADE A DOUGHNUT** in my life before we started the business,” confesses Johke Steenkamp, founder of Cape Town’s beloved (and famously persistent) vegan deli and doughnut shop Grumpy & Runt. When the ex-private chef struck out to do her own thing with her partner, Carla Gontier, it wasn’t about the product: it was about purpose.

“I was at a point in my life where I really wanted to open something of my own, filled with love and personality”, Johke reflects. By then, she had veered from her design career, gone vegan, and fallen into cooking by dint of necessity — back then, the most exciting vegan dish on any local restaurant menu was a Greek salad with the feta picked out of it.

Bearing this lack of culinary diversity in mind, Johke vowed to bring something sweeter to plant-based diners. “It needed to be sweet treats,” she insists. “I felt like we didn’t have enough. I was also mesmerised by the joy and the sharing that happens with desserts; there’s a sort of fantasy and lightness that is playful, and I really loved that.”

So, they sat down and made a list of all the possible desserts they could explore with the following guiding criteria: it had to be something simple they could produce at scale with a very small team, and it had to behave like a canvas for their creative ideas. Once they had settled on doughnuts, they indulged in two weeks of primary research in New York City — the birthplace of the doughnut.



During their tour, Johke came to appreciate a thriving doughnut culture in the United States and Canada. “People are almost emotional about their doughnuts there,” she says.

Sceptics may wish to pause and reflect here on the 2013 invention of the cronut, a croissant-doughnut hybrid developed and trademarked by French pastry chef Dominique Ansel at his eponymous bakery in SoHo. The cronut drew queues of over 100 hopeful customers within three days of its debut, and was later cited as one of the best inventions of the year by Time magazine.

Capetonians might not have the same fanatical relationship to doughnuts as New Yorkers, but that didn’t stop Grumpy & Runt from becoming a smash hit with the locals. A rotating menu of fantastic flavours drew repeat customers no matter where the shop had reopened its doors, from Dunkley Square to Loop Street. Personally, I was always inclined to try something new: milk tart-filled, dulce de leche, peanut butter and jam. But

I could never leave the Grumpy & Runt deli without at least one Homer Simpson doughnut, a classic pink-glazed and sprinkled affair, for my unswerving habitual fiancée.

For many G&R fans, the doughnut is a (very delicious) loophole through which they can explore plant-based eating without pressure. In a culture of hyper-optimisation, where veganism is sometimes perceived as being synonymous with superior moral and physical health, it’s refreshing to see people enjoy simple and delicious plant-based food.





“Ideally, we’d have more plant-based places that are less weird,” says Johke, by which she means plant-based places that are not also trying to be gluten-free, keto-friendly, and generally appealing to the kind of übermensch who regularly consumes nutrient-dense fluids.

“We just want delicious, accessible food and a relaxed, easy menu. In my universe, there would be a lot more of that,” she says.

Fortunately, delicious vegan sandwiches and doughnuts are coming back to the Cape Town culinary scene. After multiple closures, Grumpy & Runt has reopened its doors next to Honest Chocolate on Wale Street.

If time is circular and we are meant to come round to the same moments again and again, you could make an argument for the doughnut being the perfect symbol for continuity. It certainly works for Grumpy & Runt, who are no strangers to a grand reopening. Their time away is a sign of the unforgiving market conditions of their industry, but their dogged persistence is a testament to the indomitable spirit of a born Runt.

“The Runt was always part of it for me,” explains Johke when I asked her about the origins of the name. “Little runty animals are really special to me. It’s always the one I adopt, the quirky one with the fighting spirit.” It’s fitting for a business and a founder who has seen so many seasons of evolution and keeps beating the odds to come back in service of a long-standing vision. After a year away from the business, Johke feels as though she’s had a rebirth. Things are different now - Carla, the Grumpy to Johke’s Runt, has stepped away from the business, though not from their shared life - but the reset has also been something of a rediscovery.

“There was something in me that I thought I had lost,” says Johke. “I was burnt out. It was nice to see that I still have resilience and creativity - there is an abundance of it. It doesn’t run out.”

I asked Johke if she had anything to share with other business founders, but I think her words stand to be heard by a broader audience:

- *Don’t get too comfortable.*
- *Keep reinventing yourself.*
- *Ask if you need help.*
- *Never compromise on your vision or your values, even if you have to reinvent yourself to stay relevant.*

**Grumpy & Runt** has reopened its doors on Wale Street  
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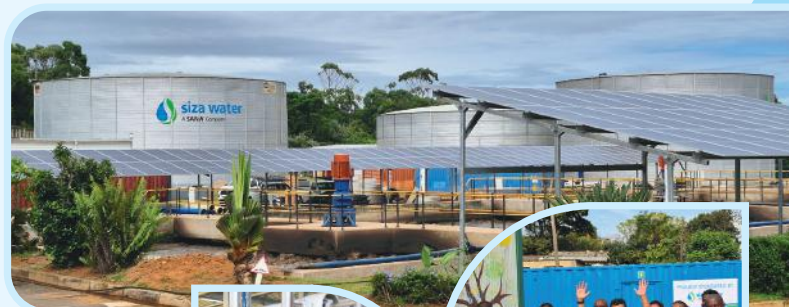
- 💧 Approximately R120,000 electricity savings per month.
- 💧 Projected annual savings of R1.5 million.
- 💧 Estimated 5-year capital payback period.

Over 25 years, the system is expected to offset approximately 18,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> — equivalent to planting nearly 300,000 trees — reinforcing Siza Water's commitment to conserving water and sustaining life.



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# GALLERY F

## A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO COLLECTING SOUTH AFRICAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Words: Shannon Devy

Photos: Supplied by Gallery F

**I**T'S A SATURDAY MORNING in May. The thickest mist I have ever seen has wrapped itself around the Cape Town City Bowl, snaking through the streets, stealing colour and re-rendering the world in hazy black and white.

I'm on my way to Gallery F, one of the top photographic galleries on the continent, and as I'm buzzed through the little black door at 78 Shortmarket Street, I step out of one monochromatic world and into another, climbing a staircase bracketed by exquisite black and white archival photographs by the likes of Ginger Odes, Billy Monk and David Lurie.

I'm here to meet Gavin and Sean Furlonger, the father-son partnership behind Gallery F, and after introductions are made and coffee prepared, we sit down to talk photography, starting with the exhibition currently up on the walls around us – Jessica Hilltout's *Amen*.

It's a collection of full-colour images captured over nine months of travel across the African continent in an old VW Beetle. Armed with a Hasselblad camera and 300 rolls of film, Hilltout explored grassroots football as a "shared language, shaped by creativity", trading manufactured footballs for rag balls and photographs. It's an extraordinary body of work. We page through Hilltout's journals, laid out on tables around the room. They're filled with handwritten notes on who she met, places she'd been and collages of smaller photographs she made with a battery-powered mini printer along the way. Lined up on a table nearby is the collection of rag balls Hilltout brought back with her.

Each ball and picture pulls a story in its wake, and it's these stories – the stories behind the photographs – that Sean and Gavin find

themselves the guardians of, just as much as the negatives and prints in their care. It's a job they take seriously. Gavin founded Gallery F in 2002 as an extension of the Photographic Archival and Preservation Association of South Africa (PAPA-SA) – which he also started – an organisation that works to locate, preserve and protect South Africa's historically significant photographic archives. Sean joined as partner and manager in 2020, focused on expanding the gallery's footprint, both geographically with an extension into Europe, and digitally, with a new website and expanding social media presence. Across these two organisations, Gavin and Sean manage and care for some incredibly important photographic archives, along with the stories they hold, including names such as Billy Monk, Paul Alberts, Jodi Bieber, Juhan Kuus, Jurgen Schadeberg, Barry Lategan and Jillian Edelstein.

I ask Gavin – who himself is a renowned glamour and portrait photographer with a career spanning over 55 years – what drew him to archival and preservation work. "I kept hearing, 'so-and-so passed away', and (I wondered) where's all his or her work? And they said, 'I think the family binned it'...I heard that far too many times," says Gavin. So he picked the two oldest photographers he knew – Ginger Odes and Desmond Bowes-Taylor – and asked them what they imagined happening to their work when they died. They had no idea. Gavin offered to take stewardship of their negatives, promising to keep the work alive. He received Ginger's archive about a year after he died. He's still waiting to receive Bowes-Taylor's.

But it's not easy. Photographic archives find their way to Gallery F in different degrees of degradation and disorder.







James Soullier - Patrol in Mozambique, 1974



Paul Alberts - Seun Met Maske, Soweto - 1983



*Juhan Kuus 1976*

Juhan Kuus - Wing Man 1976



Juhan Kuus - Arch Bishop Desmond Tutu at Nobel Peace Price Conference C 1985

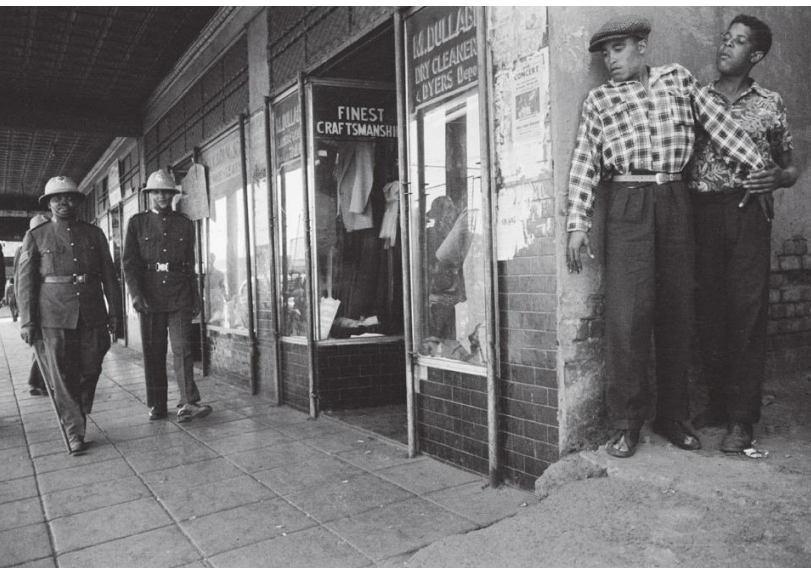


Ginger Odes - 8 Parliament Street

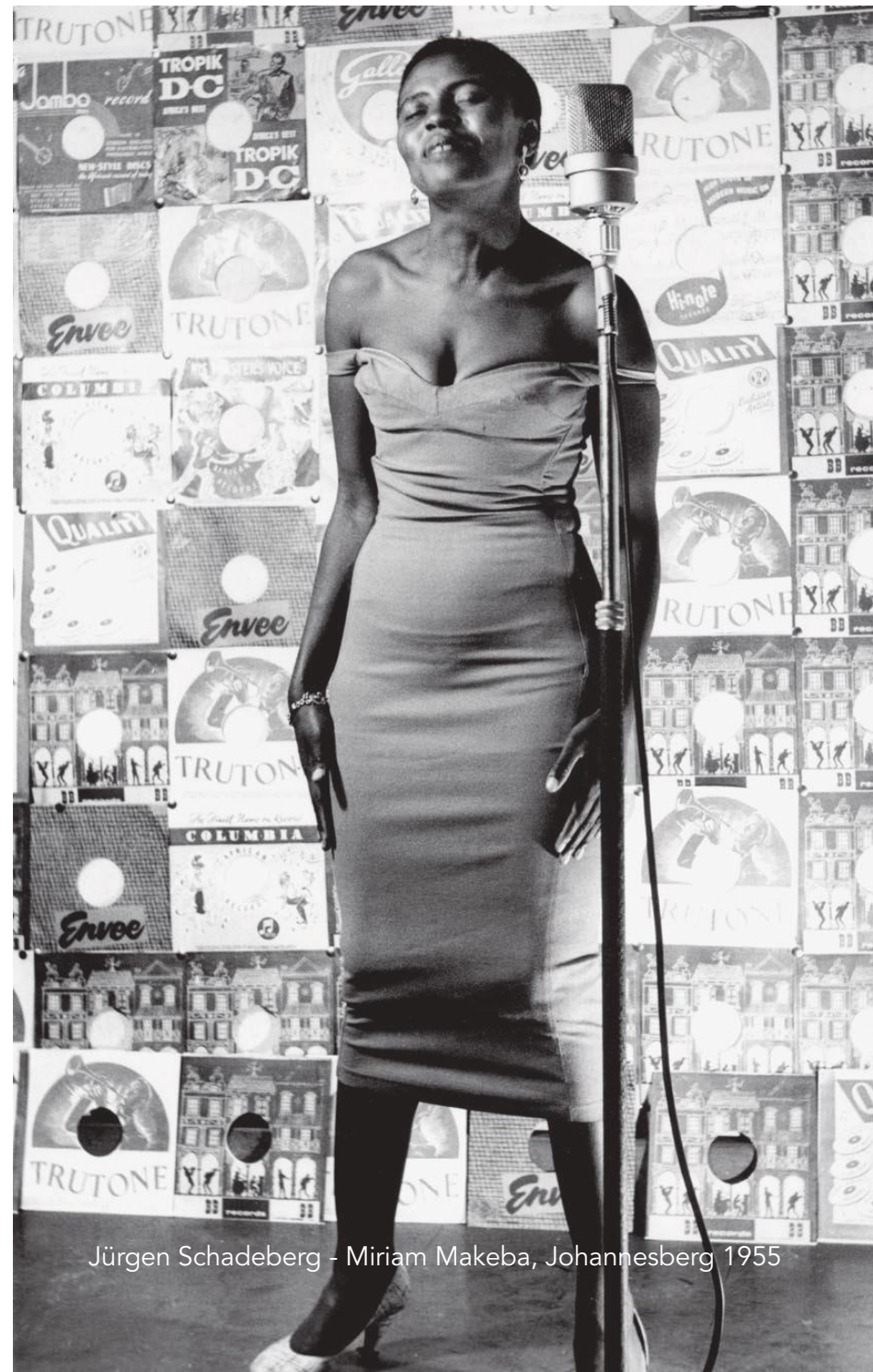




Ginger Odes - Mount Nelson 1950's



Jürgen Schadeberg - Avoiding The Pass



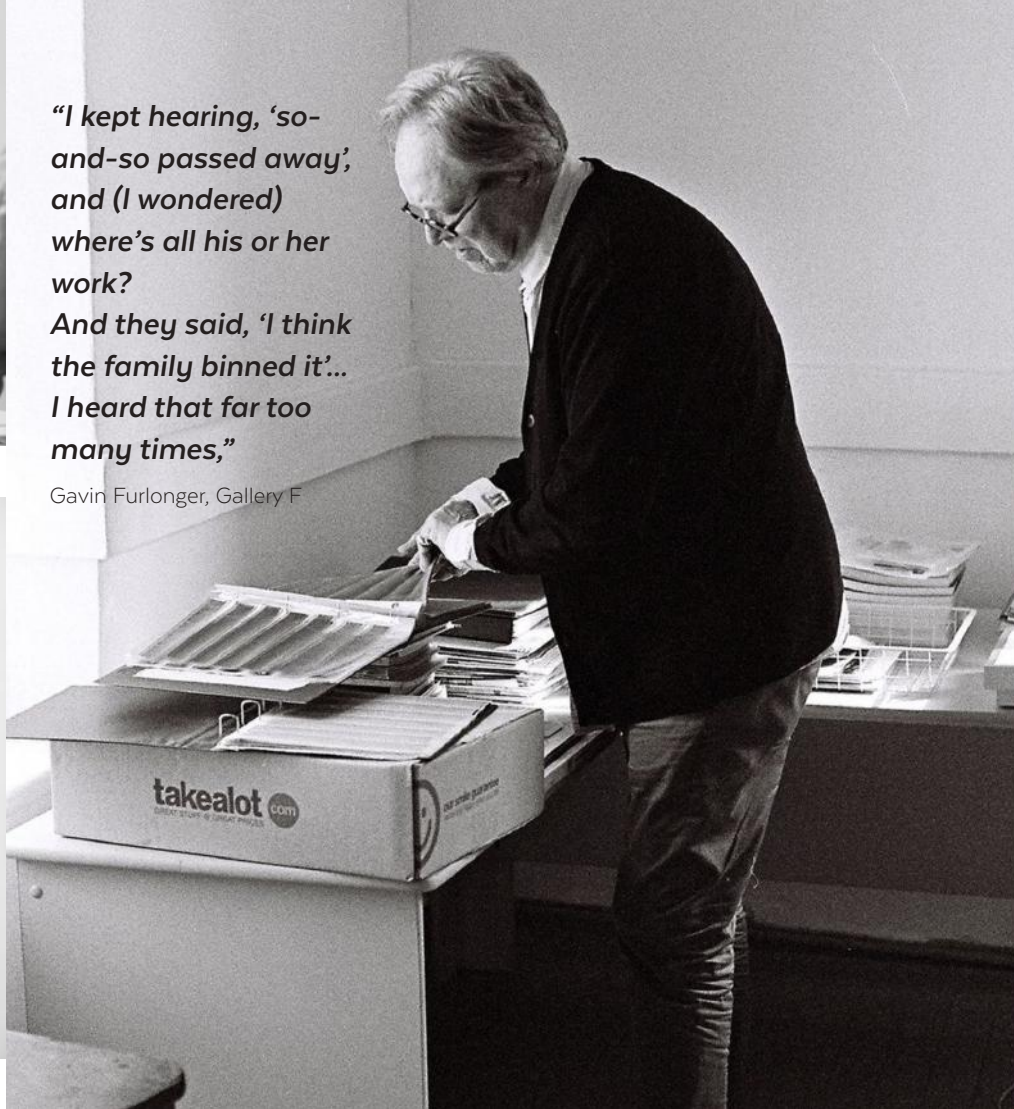
Jürgen Schadeberg - Miriam Makeba, Johannesburg 1955





*"I kept hearing, 'so-  
and-so passed away',  
and (I wondered)  
where's all his or her  
work?  
And they said, 'I think  
the family binned it'...  
I heard that far too  
many times,"*

Gavin Furlonger, Gallery F



"Sometimes we get given boxes of negatives that are meticulously labelled and preserved...some work we've received in black bags, where it's just rolls of loose film thrown in, obviously getting damaged or scratched," says Sean.

Next comes the painstaking process of negative preservation and archiving, in which the film is assessed, cleaned, re-sleeved, and then stored in an airtight box, with no dust or moisture coming in or out. After that, it's manually digitised, mostly by Sean himself. The preservation work is an entirely self-funded, time- and resource-consuming process – a true labour of love. Gavin and Sean estimate that they have about a million negatives under their stewardship. Their dark



room technician, Luke, thinks the number is much, much higher than that. But for every archive Gavin and Sean have been able to save, countless more have been lost to rats, mould, moisture, or a chemical process called vinegarisation, when the film bubbles, becomes eroded and gives off a sharp smell. In many cases, important archives are simply chucked in the bin, mostly by family members who don't realise the importance of the dusty old negatives taking up space in the garage.

I ask Gavin why he feels this photographic archival and preservation work is so important. "Because this is our history," he answers, "This is our legacy. This is a reminder of how our society has grown." He moves over to a set of drawers and pulls out a piece of archival-quality paper to show me. It's a handprint of "Patrol in Mozambique" by James Soullier, who worked as the Sunday Times' Chief Editor and Photographer for over 30 years. The image shows a black soldier sitting in a train carriage with a rifle across his lap, guarding a white baby sleeping, cherubic, across the seat behind him. It's a striking picture, rendered with perfect clarity by the master printer Dennis Da Silva. Wearing a pair of archivist's white gloves, Sean shows me how to identify an original handprint – the paper is slightly wavy from being submerged in chemical and water baths during the handprinting process. The definition, detail, and contrast balance between the deep, rich black tones and crisp, clear whites is what's so difficult to achieve. It can take many attempts to get that level of quality, Sean tells me. A master printer like Da Silva, who's been doing this for 50 years, might get it right in two.

This is where a photographic print begins to gain its value – within the constellation of deep craft that surrounds its creation. Paper and ink quality, the size of the work, the number of editions, and the printing process used to create it (handprint vs. digital print) all contribute to value, as does whether or not the work is signed by the photographer, the printer, or both. The provenance of the work is also important, which is, as Sean explains, the history of the image as well as the history of the physical print itself. For example, if it's a vintage handprint, i.e. one that was printed close to the time the photograph was taken, it may be more valuable than a more recent handprint made from that same vintage film. If it was made by a master printer, all the better!

If these factors come together in a combination that adds favourably to the print's collectability, it may well appreciate in monetary value to a startling degree after only a few years. Photography can be a sound financial investment. But, as Gavin and Sean insist, making money is not the right motivation for starting a collection. Begin, rather, with your own taste. "First of all, does (the photograph) touch you? And if it does, then it's a good start," says Gavin. "I would always say, to start with, buy something you absolutely love that you can afford. Don't think about editions or sizes, or any of that, because it can really throw you off... If you like the picture, and you want to support (the photographer), that should be the driving factor." From there, if you're



looking to build a collection, you can start figuring out things like editions, researching photographers, and so on. "And if you're collecting as a youngster, buy young photography, because it'll grow with you."

A good place to start? Gallery F's website is a remarkable resource, with a wonderful blog explaining everything a beginner collector needs to know. You can also view work from the outstanding cohort of photographers they represent, both archival and contemporary.

And next time you're in Cape Town, pop by Gallery F. While the world of galleries, editions and print collecting may seem intimidating, it's made all the more accessible by people like Sean and Gavin – passionate, approachable and likely to invite you to sit for a cup of coffee and a story or two.

**Gallery F**  
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# MOVING CANVAS

ADELE VAN HEERDEN & LEXUS RZ



**I**F SOMETHING NEVER MOVES, it will inevitably decay. When a body of water stays still, it turns stagnant - quickly losing its oxygen until it becomes a breeding ground for bacteria, mosquito larvae, and toxic algae. When a car is never driven, it rapidly deteriorates - the fluids start to degrade, the battery begins to drain, and its moving parts completely cease their function. And when art is never witnessed - when it is never shared, never championed, or never spoken of beyond the confines of gallery walls - it never gets to really live. But Adele van Heerden's art is certainly in no danger of succumbing to such a fate. I mean, especially while it's out in the world wrapped around a Lexus.

Like the waters of the Olifants River in Cederberg that inspired her recent body of work, *Alluvial*, Adele has cultivated an art career that is ever in motion. Her work has turned paint and pastel into breathtaking bodies of water that have rippled across countless exhibition walls, making waves in the eyes of procurers and appreciators of beautiful things. This momentum is a testament to her devotion to exploring the very depths of her craft by consistently refining her techniques, remaining a dedicated student of the waters that serve as her muse, and embracing the opportunity to collaborate with those who share her vision and are eager to expand upon it. That's how Adele's paintings from *Alluvial* made their way from inside the walls of the 131 A Gallery in Cape Town, where they were first unveiled, to the body of the Lexus RZ.









One of the ways that Lexus has shown their commitment to investing in the development of the arts in South Africa has been through their service as the official exclusive vehicle partner of the illustrious RMB Latitudes Art Fair - providing luxury transport for the artists and delegates in attendance and investing in artist collaborations and curatorial awards over the course of the Fair. This year, Lexus appointed the Lexus RZ, its first fully electric vehicle, as the hero car of the Fair's chauffeur service. Selected pieces from Adele's *Alluvial* exhibition were translated into bespoke vehicle wraps on two of the Lexus RZ chauffeur vehicles, transforming them into moving artworks that elevated the experience of movement between points of the fair with a refined and whisper-quiet driving experience that is conscious of the strive to preserve the natural world by opting for electric-powered travel.

"At Lexus, we believe design should be felt, not just seen," said Tasneem Lorgat, General Manager, Marketing Communications at Lexus South Africa.

"Our continued partnership with RMB Latitudes Art Fair reflects a shared commitment to meaningful, human-centered experiences, exceptional craftsmanship, and platforms that nurture long-term cultural value. Through the all-electric Lexus RZ and our collaboration with artist Adele van Heerden, we can express electrification not merely as advanced technology but as an emotional, immersive experience – where art, motion and design converge in quiet, considered harmony."

When asked about what excited her about working with Lexus on their collaboration for the RMB Latitudes Art Fair, Adele said the following:

"I deeply value and enjoy the opportunity to engage with ideas of accessibility in experiencing art, and to see how these collaborations and translations expand upon my visual language. Public spaces and city streets are as valid and visible a platform for my work as other forms of exhibition and presentation





Adele van Heerden, portrait by Paris Brummer



but, outside of the ‘white box’ of an art gallery, there’s a broader audience to connect with, and to breathe life into works, like “Glass” and “Warm” of mine, that are actively seeking this engagement as a form of animation.”

The paintings from Adele’s *Alluvial* exhibition and their translation onto the body of the Lexus RZ are an ideal embodiment of the Oasis theme that guided this year’s Fair - a theme that served as a reflection on the probability of creativity emerging from unlikely places. Paints and machinery, water and metal - two distinctly different experts of their crafts coming together to create a work of art that moves in ways neither of their works has before.

Alluvial matter - the source of this entire collaboration - consists of sediments of clay, silt, sand, or gravel that have been transported from higher-altitude areas via running water into bodies of water such as river beds. As a result of these different particles converging and moving together through their

streams that run into their respective rivers, a new matter is formed that is essential to the ecosystem of those rivers - filtering their waters and enriching the soil beneath them with nutrients.

I suppose that speaks to why collaborations - such as the one between Adele van Heerden and Lexus - are as essential in the world of art as they are in nature: When different particles intersect and carry each other, they can form a rich, fertile soil for more things to grow. Just so long as everything stays moving and moving together.

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# GOODNIGHT, AND JOY BE TO YOU ALL

Words: Dave Charles

Photo: Chris Marais

RECENTLY WATCHED A DOCUMENTARY by the BBC about the search for Paul McCartney's original 1961 Hofner bass guitar – the original Beatle violin-style bass. It was stolen out of a locked van in 1972 and the resources used to follow up on all the leads generated through a media campaign to find it were quite fascinating. The investigators eventually re-questioned one of the strongest leads they had who turned out to be the son of the man who stole it. Through him, they traced it to a pub owner who had given it to his brother, and it had been left in the attic of his home for the past fifty years.

There is a definite bond between a beloved instrument and its owner, and sadly, musicians are often parted from instruments when they need extra cash to upgrade or, in some cases, just to get by. Sometimes they find their way back, but mostly they are lost forever.

I had a guitar that I played for years. It was an Ovation Electric Legend that I bought from the late Eddie Boyle at TOMS in Joburg in 1977. I needed a professional instrument as I had been booked on the circuit by The Don Hughes Organisation, and I would be earning enough to pay it off. I can't remember what it cost but it was way more than I had ever owed on anything, and, at the time, I wasn't sure that I would be able to keep up the repayments.

I adored that guitar. It was built with new technology bonding a lyrachord rounded back to a spruce top. It had a new acoustic pickup system that allowed you to plug it into a PA system or amplifier like an electric guitar, and the sound was brilliant.

I took great care with this instrument, but somehow along the way it picked up battle scars, and each one told a story.

From literally hundreds of pubs and clubs and venues in and around Johannesburg, exotic distant gigs at the coast and expensive private game lodges in the bush, we travelled the country playing the songs and telling the stories that



kept us high on the agency booking charts. Then I moved to Cape Town for a bitter season of regret before returning to Joburg where I would find love and start a family. A few years later we moved to a home in the wild KZN bush, and I played less.

I think it was here that the sound board started to bow and the guitar became difficult to play.

After we relocated to Ballito about 23 years ago, I tried to have it repaired, but the Durban-based luthier I had been referred to told me that it was irreparable. Sadly, I believed him, and I sold it on commission at a long-gone music store in Umhlali. How I regret that decision. It could have been

repaired – I know that now, but back then I bought a replacement, a Yamaha CPX 8. This was a fine guitar that I got at a discount at another long-gone music store in The Square in Umhlanga.

I have played this guitar for the past 23 years, and I think it may have improved with age. Then I went through a period of guitar acquisition. It was a kind of obsession, madness almost, where I had to buy every unusual guitar I could afford. Eventually, I ran out of space on the walls of my studio and my obsession lifted.

And I stopped playing. I put it down to age and hands that had been damaged by excessive playing. I didn't touch a guitar for a long time – long enough to lose it a bit.

But recently I started playing that Yamaha again, quietly to myself, and it all came back. And they all came back. All the friends I had played with over the years came back to play the songs we shared, and I realised that I had stopped playing because I had missed them so much.

They say that people go when their names are spoken for the last time, but I think it's when the last of their songs has been played by those who remember them.

So I will keep on playing for a while. After all, I am in good company.





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An aerial photograph of a residential neighborhood during the 'golden hour' of sunset. Several white, two-story houses with dark green metal roofs are visible, each equipped with a large array of black solar panels. The houses are arranged in a row, with some featuring small balconies and white railings. The surrounding landscape is a mix of green grass and trees, with a few scattered buildings and utility poles in the distance. In the background, a range of mountains is silhouetted against the warm, orange and yellow glow of the setting sun. The sky is a deep blue with some light clouds. The overall mood is peaceful and modern, emphasizing sustainable living.

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