

BRIGHT LIGHTS, BIG CITY

With its 360-degree views of Johannesburg's magical cityscape, it is hard to imagine that the design of the Randlords bar and lounge could beat its magnificent setting – but it does.

PHOTOS Dook PRODUCTION Annemarie Meintjes AND Klara van Wyngaarden WORDS Jacqueline Myburgh Chemaly





WHAT DO YOU GET

when you take one of Africa's leading architecture and lifestyle design teams, plus the duo who have decorated and run some of the most luxurious lodges on the continent, and give them the task of creating a bar on the 22nd floor of a Braamfontein office block? A serious dose of sky-high African magic, that's what.

Known for site-specific custom-designed hotels and homes, Silvio Rech and Lesley Carstens architects (SRLC) were in new territory tackling the buildings of downtown Jozi. But their brief, to design a macro vision for the community and future of Braamfontein for South Point developers, headed by Rob Lowdon and Edelweiss Gray, gave the pair a chance to bring their unique style of African luxury to a city in desperate need of pampering.

Having established a "super-plan" for South Point's Braamfontein vision, Silvio and Lesley started their first project: the creation of the Randlords sky bar on top of the old Sable Towers Building. They used the same approach that has earned them much praise for their design of game lodges all over Africa, creating every last inch of the venue. The result is breathtaking.

When it came to the guest experience, who better to call on but their former colleagues Debra Fox and Chris Browne of Fox Browne Creative?

It was at unforgettable places such as &Beyond's Ngorongoro Crater Lodge that these two teams collaborated to perfect the concept of Persian carpets, red roses and crystal chandeliers in the wild.

At Randlords, they have found that magic once again and the result is an urban escape to quirky luxury combined with six-star hospitality. The concept is perfectly in sync with a contemporary Johannesburg lifestyle: a little bit of Africa, a touch of burlesque and a lot of sophistication.

The space comprises a gleaming bar and a collection of lounge areas complete with leather-strapped couches, poufs, wooden stools and beaded swings, all with a drop-dead view of the city and its outer limits.

Outside, it is possible to take in Soccer City and Sandton City in one visual sweep. At night, fire pits and a glass balcony make this the coolest rooftop spot in Johannesburg.

The menu includes a range of tapas, from pesto-dipped beef skewers to sky's-the-limit blinis. The not-to-be-missed party trick is a bespoke drinks trolley – complete with your own butler – that is yours for the evening. Also, look out for risqué videos on loop in the men's loo, and gorgeous waitresses wearing blonde wigs and gold boots. It's all very James Bond.

There has been talk for years that Joburg's CBD is being revived. Randlords and its big-city style may just be the tipping point. **V**

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- Address Book on page 143

THE SUSTAINABLE CITY

RANDLORDS IS PART OF A SUSTAINABLE VISION THAT DEVELOPER SOUTH POINT HAS FOR BRAAMFONTEIN.

Silvio Rech and Lesley Carstens have spent the past year working with South Point to plot a design vision for Braamfontein that will not only mean a renewed sense of community but also a better-looking city in which buildings have been tied together architecturally. They have already imploded one building to make some much-needed breathing space, have virtually rebuilt the city on their computers, and are working alongside branding specialist Kees Schilpoort of X-Facta to bring South Point's vision alive.

So far, developments have included the transformation of previously neglected buildings into affordable, stylish student accommodation. South Point is also laying on after-hours entertainment in the form of bars, restaurants, coffee shops and the trendy Lamunu Hotel, designed by Simon Cretney of Lupini Architects, on De Korte Street.

Given the location of Park Station on Braamfontein's southern boundary, the thinking is that this could become a dormitory suburb for the Sandton business centre, especially once the Gautrain's southern-most leg is completed.

After all, not everyone can afford to – or even wants to – move to the north. A new-look Braamfontein is set to become an attractive alternative.

ABOVE RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM Architects Lesley Carstens and Silvio Rech of SRLC; Chris Browne and Debra Fox of Fox Browne Creative. **ABOVE LEFT** The bar was made by Silvio's family business, Modellers. Blue strip lighting picks up the intensity of the sky, reflected in the 7m chandelier. Three hundred hand-blown glass balls refract the twilight sky.

OPPOSITE, LEFT The glamour of the beaded swings, handmade by SRLC, is counterbalanced by a collection of enamelled-wood turned stools. **OPPOSITE, RIGHT** Steel day beds act as glamorous nests in the sky. **OPENING SPREAD, LEFT** The 11m black-lacquered wooden bar and glass chandelier were designed by SRLC. The bar takes its shape and colour from the diamonds and coal that have contributed to the city's riches. **OPENING SPREAD, RIGHT** Black leather "bondage" couches, designed by SRLC, consist of a series of modular blocks. Assorted ottomans and raw wooden benches complete the picture.

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Colour-changing, mood-setting lighting by Paul Pamboukian reflects the energy of the city lights. Black mirrored ceilings reflect the white-gloss timber floor, offset by the raw-concrete plastered walls. The sparkle of the city is picked up in the blues of Silvio and Lesley's range of furniture, including beaded swings, custom glassware, metallic ottomans and roof stools. The "bondage" couches also form part of the range. Chris Browne's agate carpet picks up on South Africa's mineral heritage.

OPPOSITE The world-class view from the bar and deck over Nelson Mandela Bridge, the train station and downtown Johannesburg.

