

Rhythms and accents of light

by Anthony Tischhauser, Pamboukian lightdesign



The first sight of The Club at Steyn City is the lush vegetation on its roofs, not easy to distinguish from its surroundings. Passing earthy rock stacked walls and entering through the large square and maroon brick arch, a dream-like endless view unfolds. The complex received a Special Commendation at the 2015 GIFA (Gauteng Institute for Architecture) Awards. It is centrally situated in the 1000 ha Steyn City and was the first building to be completed in this 'Parkland Residence' on the northern periphery of Greater Johannesburg, now being developed. The Club by Boogertman + Partners commands a magnificent view over what was barren land, bar townships and other loose development, designated for industrial development.

The cluster of buildings sits at the start and

finish of the 9th and 18th holes on an edge of an old abandoned mined quarry. The Jukskei River passes close by with two holes playing directly alongside it. Golf Data started construction of the Jack Nicklaus design in February 2009. The course features 73 bunkers and all greens are built to USGA specification. A golfer sitting at the bar said: 'I like the challenge, it's difficult to play and undoubtedly one of the ten best courses in the country.'

The architect's brief required a clubhouse that should have minimal impact on the site. The building should be integrated into its surroundings, responsive and sensitive and also functional and sustainable.

The architect's answer was: 'Architecture where once there was nothing, utilising the fissures in the landscape to create life, shelter and space.

Bidding to blur the boundaries of interior and exterior, achieving a constant connection with nature, and creating an harmonious tension between the produced and the natural. The grassland sweeps over the architecture, and it in turn merges with its surroundings by exploiting the slope of the land to intentionally reduce its scale. The fragmentation of the building components enhances its connection with nature by juxtaposing the buildings' organic shapes with the Highveld landscape.' This, of course, also conforms with the design philosophy of Steyn City which states; 'it's not about the architecture; it's about the lifestyle and the inter-linking spaces between the architecture.'

The building complex comprises four 'blocks' or 'elements' juxtaposed across a terrace with

exquisite views dotted with noisy bird-life. The Clubhouse, as such, with lounge and restaurant (The 19th Hole) is a double-volume space and generous. The sports shop (Pro Shop) an element in its own and most singular in design, on the inter-linking terrace is hidden behind a spine of trees. Another element houses the gym, change rooms and administration. Obviously, parking by far takes the largest space.

Emphasis was placed on the latest technologies regarding lighting, heat reclaim and distribution, grey water utilisation, recycling and reuse of building material, greening of the architectural façades as well as the use of façade shading systems and performance glazing. The architects requested an independent lighting designer – Pamboukian lightdesign.

The clubhouse with western gatehouse to Steyn City on the horizon.



Entrance to The Club with the Pro Shop visible on the left.



Parking garage with custom-made ceiling up-down ambient light.



The fitness studio and sports-shop.



The lighting concept enhances the complex nestled so-to-say under a mound, almost growing out of the earth, by motivating subtle light from the bottom up that grazes the glass façade supports, casting a soft glow onto the concrete eaves. The glazed façades glow from within, lantern-like, so the glazing disappears and the interiors dissolve onto the terrace. The building is articulated with rhythms and accents of light rather than broad washes.

DSGN Interior Designers developed the 'ye old world' interiors with high arches, raw stone walls, varied textures, and a colour palette of earthy tones. The interiors are evocative and inviting, while not impacting too prominently on the night-scape. The interior has the comfort and ambience that one would expect from an exclusive club; warm light, changing ambience, dignified and comfortable.

By contrast, the carefully packed brown-grey exterior stone gabion walls, from stone excavated on site and hidden behind trees shrubs and bushes, are gently brought to life at night through soft up lighting. The landscape lighting is kept at a low level in order not to interfere with the land as it rolls out. Nor does glare from the terrace interfere with views onto the 18th hole and beyond, or disturb the last late golfer.

Dimming control was essential to achieve this as the complex, orientated to the West, is subjected to extreme daylight changes. The conscious balancing of artificial and natural light is imperative to maintaining an internal ambience that is not given to overly high light contrast, especially in the afternoons and towards sunset. LID

All photographs by Natalie Payne.