

NOBU MATSUHISA

SURFACE

ISSUE 142
OCTOBER 2017

THE TRAVEL ISSUE





A vibrant medley of global cuisine, African art, and homegrown design has catapulted Cape Town.

BY SARAH KHAN

If I may be so candid—and, dare I admit it, so very American—before my first trip to South Africa five years ago, my understanding of the country was limited to Nelson Mandela, apartheid, and lions. As far as Cape Town went—there was a mountain or something, right? And some penguins on a beach I was supposed to meet? My myopia was all the more embarrassing when you take into account that I was working for a prominent travel magazine at the time.

That is all to say, I arrived in the Mother City with few expectations to exceed and not much hype to risk falling short of. And in a dizzying four-day stint soaking in Cape Town's history, architecture, and restaurants—and yes, Table Mountain and the Boulders Beach penguin colony—I discovered enough to hook me for good. So much so that I uprooted my life in New York to move there a year later.

What I found on the southwestern tip of the African continent was a city humming with energy, culture, and damn good food (and no lions). The year after I arrived, in a nod to its creative talents and enterprising entrepreneurs, Cape Town was anointed World Design Capital 2014—an opportunity for the city to showcase not only its cutting-edge fashion and crafts, but also its innovative use of design to improve community development and infrastructure. This year, all eyes are back on the city thanks to the September opening of the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa, the first-ever institution of its kind dedicated to showcasing works from across the continent and the diaspora. The metamorphosis of an abandoned 1920s grain silo by Thomas Heatherwick is currently the most-talked-about structure on the continent. While the artwork—a dizzying mix of more than 2,000 works from the likes of South African Athi-Patra Ruga, Angolan Edson Chagas, Beninese Leonce Raphael Agbodjélou, and African American Kehinde Wiley—is the main event, the building itself is as much a masterpiece as anything you'll find inside. "Industrial buildings are exciting to all architects," says Stepan

Martinovsky, the lead architect from Heatherwick Studio. "Many times they've been abandoned for some time, so they're almost romantic—it's like you're visiting medieval castles. These are castles of the industrial age."

I've been following the Zeitz MOCAA journey from its earliest days, when I sat in the auditorium at the Design Indaba festival in 2014 as Heatherwick unveiled his vision for the space, a derelict relic that most visitors to the heavily trafficked V&A Waterfront didn't deign to give a second look. Since then, I've interviewed Heatherwick more than once, taken hard-hat tours of the construction site, and stayed at the Silo, Cape Town's sexiest—and most expensive—new hotel, which crowns the top of the silo tower like a shimmering jewel.

That German philanthropist (and ex-Puma head) Jochen Zeitz chose Cape Town as the site for a museum whose transformative ambitions are in company with the Guggenheim Bilbao's and Turner Contemporaries of the world. It's also a testament to the city's booming art scene. For more than a decade, the Woodstock enclave has been the city's creative hub, with resuscitated factories and Victorian-era buildings welcoming

stylish galleries, artists' studios, and boutiques with a proudly South African ethos. It's also where you'll find murals by some of the world's top artists lining the walls of residential streets; current street-art darling Kelsey Montague just added a pair of her signature wings to Woodstock. But I'm particularly partial to my old neighborhood, the Central Business District. An area that was, until recently, wracked with crime is now a lively, pedestrian-friendly swath lined with art spaces and enough coffee shops to make café-hopping a Capetonian pastime. "Back when I got here, I was assaulted by knife-wielding kids while walking half a block," remembers American expat Jake Easton, owner of cult coffee brand Tribe. "Now I can walk clear across town with zero problem." Every month, thousands of Capetonians descend on the CBD streets for First Thursdays revelry, the ultimate testament to how far the area has come.

Restaurant kitchens also double as canvases across Cape Town, with adventurous chefs experimenting with culinary innovations that could rival anything found in London or New York. For years I chronicled my epicurean exploits under the hashtag #capeofgoodeats, documenting lazy Saturday mornings market-hopping between Neighbourgoods and Oranjezicht, caffeine fixes at any number of design-forward cafés, or attempts to eat my way through Cape Town's booming restaurant row, Bree Street—where the chic bistro fare of Mink & Trout, Peruvian dishes of Charango, and gourmet grown-up grilled-cheese sandwiches of Culture Club Cheese divvy up the real estate.

After four years in Cape Town, I've returned to the States, but the city keeps luring me back despite the achingly long flight. Cape Town is far (give or take 18 hours from New York), meaning that it's not a place you just "happen upon." And whether you come looking for penguins or paintings, hikes or haute cuisine, that long trip is worth it every time. >



PHOTO: COURTESY ONE&ONLY.

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) IWAN BAAN, COURTESY ZEITZ MOCAA, ADRIAAN LOUW, COURTESY OF THE ROYAL PORTFOLIO.



HOTELS

Cape Town experienced a major hotel boom in the leadup to the 2010 World Cup, but things quieted down even before the last vuvuzelas went silent. No longer. The past year has seen a mix of stylish new stays pop up across the city. Leading the crest is the 28-key **Silo Hotel**, a glamorous perch atop the Zeitz MOCAA that is brimming with contemporary art. While the works on display are from the private collection of the Biden family, who owns the property and several others throughout South Africa, there's plenty of synergy with the museum below. Kenyan photographer Cyrus Kabiru's self-portraits with spectacles made from recycled materials are part of Zeitz MOCAA's permanent collection, for instance, and one of his distinctive headpieces is on display in the hotel lobby. Liz Biden is a local legend for the signature dramatic flair and wild use of colors she brings to her hotels' interiors, and the Silo is no different, with vivid shades of chartreuse, fuchsia, and teal against the

cement-and-steel backdrop. Bonus: the Silo lays claim to some of the world's most Instagrammed bathtubs, all nestled into the building's distinctive pillowed-glass windows.

And a much-delayed but hotly anticipated opening is on deck for later this year in the charmingly retro Seapoint neighborhood: **the Ritz**, a 1970s-era glass tower complete with a kitschy revolving restaurant helmed by South African celebrity chef Bertus Basson crowning its 22nd floor, is being thoroughly revamped into a glamorous hangout with a distinctly Miami vibe.

But Cape Town hotel-industry stalwarts need not worry—the old guard have plenty of loyal guests who won't easily be swayed by these glossy debutantes. The **One&Only** is a favorite among A-list celebs in town for movie shoots and concert performances, and most of the 131 Adam Tihany-designed rooms capture inspiring views of Table Mountain with massive picture-frame windows. Turn-of-the-19th-century

Mount Nelson is the Mother City's grande dame, a rose-hued confection that has become a landmark for its genteel high tea; it's now sporting a youthful new look thanks to a major face-lift of the lobby and public areas. Come summer—November through February in this neck of the woods—the Atlantic Seaboard is the place to be: the **Cape View Clifton** is a stylish seven-room coastal hideaway on the bluffs overlooking Clifton Beach, while the 11-room, two-villa **Ellerman House**, set in an elegant Edwardian mansion in Bantry Bay, houses one of the most expansive private collections of South African art in town. Even if you haven't booked a stay, don't miss a tasting in the wine gallery, which features an immense carbon-fiber wine rack shaped like a corkscrew as its focal point. For something a bit stronger, grab a seat at the terrazzo-and-brass counter of the new Bar Roc, an homage to the Italian-mod watering holes of Milan by Okha Interiors.

PHOTO: COURTESY ELLERMAN HOUSE.

(FROM TOP) A room with a view inside the Silo Hotel. The pool deck at Cape View Hotel. Nobu Booth at One&Only. (OPPOSITE) A place to lounge inside Ellerman House's Bar Roc.



CHARMAINE TAYLOR
JEWELRY DESIGNER, LEGACY
COLLECTION

"There is a fantastic buzz, super-friendly clientele, and great coffee at **Bootleggers** in Sea Point. My other favorite is **Jason's Bakery** on Bree Street—they have the best freshly baked pastries and also a great breakfast. **The Gin Bar** on Wale Street is a little hidden gem in a gorgeous heritage courtyard behind Honest Chocolate. My gin of choice is Inverroche, which is infused with South African fynbos plants. **Harringtons** cocktail lounge is fast becoming a hot spot on Friday nights; I love experiencing their live acoustic bands early in the evenings and then amazing DJs later on. Concerts at **Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens** are a major tradition in the summer months. I come prepared with my own picnic, blanket, and a warm jacket and sit in the rolling green lawns with an epic mountain backdrop. It feels like you're not in the city."

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) COURTESY OF THE ROYAL PORTFOLIO. HAMISH NIVEN. COURTESY CAPE VIEW. COURTESY ONE&ONLY.





SARAH ORD
INTERIOR DESIGNER

"I tend to start my day at the **Stack**, the club and brasserie my husband and I own, with a steaming pot of Enmasse Earl Grey tea and a melty bacon-and-cheese croissant. Meeting mom for lunch at **Hemelhuijs** always keeps my neck swiveling at all the clever merchandise and décor ideas set out by chef, designer, and artist Jacques Erasmus. As the evenings warm up, we head to **Thali** and sit in the courtyard under the stars while gorging on delicious Indian food masterminded by our mate, Liam Tomlin."

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) IWAN BAAN, COURTESY ZEITZ MOCAA, ADRIAAN LOUW, COURTESY OF THE ROYAL PORTFOLIO, COURTESY OF STATEOFTHEART.

CULTURE

While the opening of the **Zeitz MOCAA** has captured the world's attention this year, Cape Town has been emerging as an art and design hub for the better part of two decades. Every March Cape Town hosts the Design Indaba festival, drawing luminaries like David Adjaye, William Kentridge, Thomas Heatherwick, and Ferran Adrià to ruminate on their creative processes. The city also welcomes the Cape Town Art Fair each February, bringing local contemporary art to global collectors on a major scale. And while the Zeitz MOCAA is putting the Silo district at the V&A Waterfront on the map—Trevyn McGowan and Julian McGowan recently relocated their **Guild** gallery, a showcase for collectible South African design, to the area—most of the city's art spaces remain clustered in the CBD and Woodstock. The rough-around-the-edges neighborhood, known for dilapidated Victorian-era houses and vivid graffiti murals, is

home to trailblazers like **Stevenson Gallery**, **Whatiftheworld**, and **Goodman Gallery**. In the CBD, walk from the cavernous **Gallery Momo** on Buitengracht Street to the new home of **State of the Art** on Buitenkant Street, with stops at **Youngblood**, **Ebony**, **99 Loop**, **AVA**, and **Worldart** along the way. Keep an eye out for works by rising stars of South African contemporary art, making up a complex, politically charged scene deeply rooted in the climate on the continent and beyond—it won't be long before the likes of Mary Sibande, Atang Tshikare, Khaya Witbooi, Wim Botha, and Hasan and Husain Essop become household names outside the country. To get a true taste of Cape Town's electric creative energy, you have to be there at the beginning of the month: First Thursdays is a city-wide event, with galleries and boutiques staying open until late and patrons overflowing from restaurants and bars onto the CBD streets.

A view of Atrium from Tunnel. (OPPOSITE, FROM TOP) The Atrium at night. Stellar Exhibition at Southern in Guild Silo. An outside view of SOTA Gallery.



PHOTO: IWAN BAAN, COURTESY ZEITZ MOCAA.



RESTAURANTS AND BARS

Cape Town's innovation also extends to its gastronomy, a varied tableau of global flavors and local ingredients befitting a country with the sobriquet "Rainbow Nation." Leading the pack is Luke Dale-Roberts, a U.K. transplant whose seemingly eternal tasting menus regularly land the **Test Kitchen** on the World's 100 Best Restaurants list, while his more laid-back **Pot Luck Club** has revolutionized South Africans' approach to dining out with eminently shareable Asian-inspired small plates. Crowning the Old Biscuit Mill in the Woodstock district, architect Greg Scott and designer Nina Sierra did the place up in herringbone chestnut floors and custom-painted screens by artist Peter Eastman.

Dale-Roberts might own the highest profile, but there's a whole class of talent waiting in the wings. The chef teamed up with his protégé Wesley Randles on the **Shortmarket Club**, where the menu

is filled with modern twists served with old-world elegance—sumac-roasted duck breast with burned baba ghanoush and saffron harissa, served by white-coated waiters. Scot Kirton's **La Colombe** earns him plenty of global accolades thanks to French-inflected dishes like springbok tartare with foie gras and beetroot risotto with *beurre noisette*; last year he opened the more relaxed **Foxtrot**, while this past August saw his team moving into the celebrated winelands town of Franschhoek with the debut of **La Petite Colombe**, an elegant, neutral-hued dining room with wood-clad ceilings and parquet flooring, conceived by interior designer Beverley Boswell and architect Rohan Young. And judging by the long list of chefs, sommeliers, and critics who jostle for space around the communal tables at his **Chef's Warehouse** on Bree Street, Liam Tomlin is a firm favorite among restaurant-industry insiders. His tapas

menu is constantly changing, but the crowds at this walk-in joint are a fixture (you can wait for a table to free up at the aptly named No Reservations bar downstairs). Tomlin recently expanded his empire with not one but two high-profile openings that had Cape Town connoisseurs abuzz this year: a new outpost of Chef's Warehouse overlooking the scenic slopes of the Constantia winelands, and an Indian eatery, the Sally Chapman-designed **Thali**, in a blue house just off Kloof Street, brimming with Indian antiques, mosaic dining tables, and Chapman's wallpaper of hand-sketched birds. But Cape Town's dining scene isn't just a boys' club: Last year, Ash Heeger left London—and stints at acclaimed restaurants like Brett Graham's Ledbury and Heston Blumenthal's Dinner—to return home to South Africa and open her eponymous **Ash**, where the young chef's brand of charcoal cooking is served by

PHOTO: COURTESY THE SHORTMARKET CLUB.

a maître d' in a minimalist matte black space by Marco Simal of Studio Simal.

The city's nightlife veers from high to low and back again. South Africa is synonymous with wine, and you can taste some of the top indie bottles at **Publik**, the subterranean wine bar that shares a space with Ash. There's no sign above the doorway of **Outrage of Modesty** on Shortmarket Street—instead look for the neon sign that reads: "Life has become immeasurably better since I have been forced to stop taking it seriously." Inside the Japanese-style cocktail den, which has a hint of Danish modernism, New York City mixologist Greg Seider has concocted quirkily named drinks like Elevation of the Obscene, a blend of Japanese whiskeys, toasted cardamom, house *yuzu* made of indigenous fruits, apple-blossom tea tincture; and Lions in Londolzi, an herbaceous mix of African gin and vermouth. Local interior designer Sarah Ord was liberal in her use of bold colors at the **Stack**, a members-only club in a restored heritage building that's awash in vivid teal and gold and violet and animal print—luckily, even nonmembers can indulge in her signature aesthetic at the cozy ground-floor bar. >

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) COURTESY CHEF'S WAREHOUSE; COURTESY SHORTMARKET CLUB.



(FROM TOP) A tabletop view of a meal from Chef's Warehouse Publik wine bar. (OPPOSITE) An interior view of Shortmarket Club.



An interior look inside the store Stable.
(OPPOSITE) A barstool at Firenze.
Another interior view of Stable.

SHOPPING

Capetonians like their Gucci, Chloé, and Kenzo as much as the next person, but they proudly declare that “Local is Lekker” (“cool,” as the regional slang has it) by mixing those labels with pieces from homegrown fashion and accessories brands. Start your shopping safari at the **V&A Waterfront**, but be sure to bypass the mega-mall packed with the likes of H&M and Topshop. Instead, head for the **Watershed** design market, where you can pick up distinctive bracelets and rope necklaces at Pichulik and leather bags from Chapel. The Silo precinct is quickly becoming a prime retail address, with two major local labels opening flagships in recent months: fashion designer **Kat van Duinen**, who incorporates ostrich feather, python skin, and crocodile leather into her looks, and jewelry designer **Kirsten Goss**, whose lily-pad ring once won the coveted title of Most Beautiful Object in South Africa from Design Indaba.

Look out for more *lekker* local finds in the CBD. Mungo and Jemima on Long Street carries Titch bags, Bamboo Revolution watches, and Good Clothing frocks. You can browse locally made cotton shirts and denim at the brand-new menswear shop Proper Store on Shortmarket Street, while Convoy on Bree Street is a collective of burgeoning South African brands like Merwe S.A.L.T., Mareth Colleen, and Found Collection. A historic art nouveau building is home to **Merchants on Long**, designer and heiress Hanneli Rupert’s beautifully compiled concept store featuring luxe brands from across the African continent. And to take home some high-design housewares for your pad, check out **Stable** on Loop Street (Laurie Wiid van Heerden’s sculptural metal pendant lights and cork benches might be a bit unwieldy for transport, but his jugs and containers will pack well into your luggage) or Woodstock’s **Pedersen + Lennard**, known for its colorful, Scandi-style furniture and fittings.

PHOTO: COURTESY STABLE.



SETH SHEZI
WRITER AND PHOTOGRAPHER

“There’s a force of young local designers reshaping the fashion scene, including Adriaan Kuiters and Jody Paulsen, Pichulik, Selfi, and Nicholas Coutts. All can be found under one roof at the Kloof Street boutique **AKJP Collective**. After a Saturday-morning visit to the everpopular **Neighbourgoods Market** in Woodstock, I enjoy stopping over at **Imprint ZA** and Lara Klawikowski’s studio. For accessories, the **Threads Project** collates a large array of high-quality locally produced products, including socks, jewels, hats, and leather goods.”



PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) PEDERSEN + LEONARD. COURTESY STABLE.