

# designingways

ISSUE 301

PULL UP A CHAIR

BREAKFAST NOOKS

KITCHEN WORKTOPS



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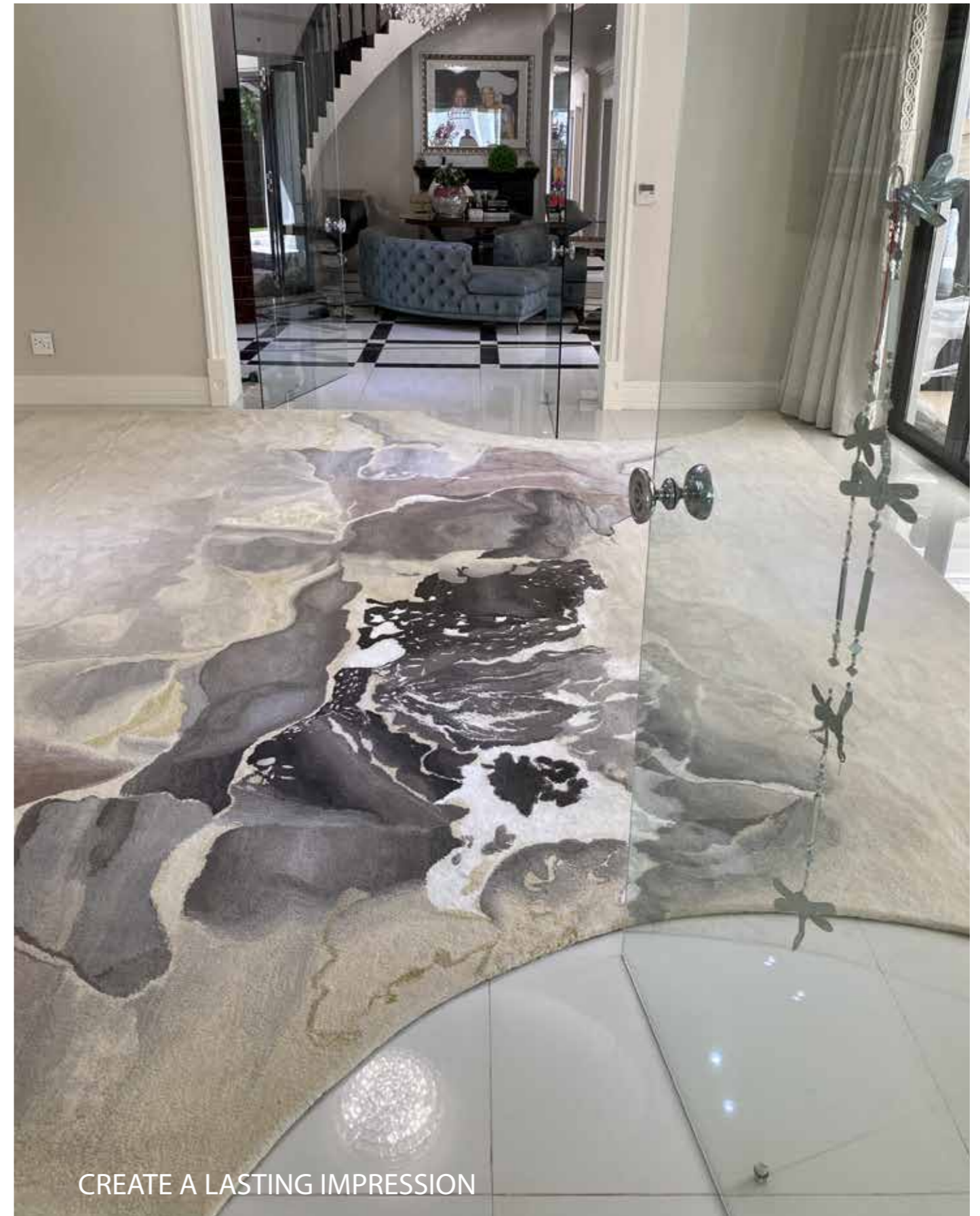


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## The Master Plan behind furniture manufacturing's comeback

South Africa's furniture manufacturing sector is entering a decisive phase. As the Furniture Industry Master Plan shifts from policy framework to active implementation, manufacturers are beginning to see tangible changes in localisation, export access and competitiveness, signalling renewed momentum for an industry central to employment, industrial growth and economic recovery.

For several years, the Furniture Industry Master Plan was largely viewed as a policy discussion taking place beyond the factory floor. That perception is now changing. Across the sector, implementation is translating into practical outcomes that manufacturers are starting to experience directly.

Introduced in 2021 and jointly developed by government, industry bodies, manufacturers and organised labour, the Master Plan was designed to stabilise and rebuild South Africa's furniture manufacturing base. Its objective is clear: strengthen local production, improve competitiveness and position South African manufacturers for export-led growth.

The South African Furniture Initiative (SAFI), the national body representing local furniture manufacturers, sees the Master Plan as a turning point for industry coordination. "For the first time,



industry, labour and government are working within a shared framework," says SAFI CEO Greg Boule. "That alignment allows us to address structural challenges in a practical and coordinated way."

### Why the sector matters now

Furniture manufacturing remains one of South Africa's most labour intensive industrial sectors, contributing approximately 0.95% to manufacturing GDP and 1.6% to manufacturing employment.

After two decades of contraction driven largely by rising imports and declining competitiveness, employment levels have begun stabilising. The furniture manufacturing industry is a labour-intensive industry. Employment increased from just over 29,000 workers in 2021 to more than 30,800 by 2024, an early indication that confidence is returning.

### Turning strategy into implementation

At the centre of the Master Plan lie the following six pillars designed to remove long standing barriers to industry growth:

1. **Localisation** aims to increase demand for locally manufactured furniture while addressing unfair import practices. Industry engagement has already exposed tariff misclassification and trade asymmetries that have historically disadvantaged compliant local manufacturers.
2. **Competitiveness** focuses on enabling manufacturers to scale through improved access to finance, investment support and stronger collaboration across the value chain, allowing businesses to modernise operations and improve efficiency.
3. **Export promotion** expands market access beyond domestic demand. SAFI aligned export initiatives are connecting manufacturers with buyers across Africa, Europe and the Gulf, reinforcing global demand for South African design and manufacturing capability.
4. **Raw material supply** addresses upstream constraints by improving the availability and stability of critical production inputs.
5. **Skills development** prioritises rebuilding technical capability through workplace training, qualification development and attracting new entrants into manufacturing careers.
6. **Transformation** promotes broader participation across the value chain, ensuring inclusive and sustainable industry growth aligned with national development priorities.

### SAFI's role in strengthening the industry

While the Master Plan provides direction, implementation depends on coordination



## Designing Rugs with Architectural Intent



### Elevating Interiors Through Sculptural Form

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custom rugs

and execution. SAFI plays a central role in translating strategy into practical industry support. The organisation acts as a bridge between manufacturers, government departments, regulators, retailers and international markets. Through ongoing engagement with SARS, the DTIC, SABS and the NRCS, SAFI advocates for fair trade enforcement, improved compliance and policies that support local manufacturing competitiveness.

At the same time, SAFI is delivering tangible commercial opportunities through export missions, buyer matchmaking initiatives and digital platforms such as the national Furniture Catalogue and Export Market Finder. These tools are designed to position South African manufacturers directly within global procurement networks.

Industry aligned skills programmes are also helping rebuild technical capacity, generating workplace learning opportunities and supporting the next generation of manufacturing talent.

“Our role is to translate policy into opportunity,” says Boule. “Manufacturers should be seeing real value emerging from collective industry action.”

**Where manufacturers are already feeling the impact**

Although implementation of the Furniture Industry Master Plan remains ongoing, measurable changes are already emerging across the sector, particularly in areas linked to fair competition and market access.

Coordinated export initiatives are generating growing international interest, reinforcing the global competitiveness of South African furniture manufacturers when properly positioned in international

markets. Collaboration across government, retailers, labour and industry bodies has also strengthened significantly, creating a shared platform through which challenges are increasingly addressed collectively rather than in isolation.

Increased scrutiny of import declarations is beginning to address long standing trade asymmetries that have undermined local manufacturers, while industry engagement with standards bodies is advancing compulsory specifications aimed at preventing inferior or non-compliant products from entering the market.

“This is fundamentally about fairness,” says SAFI CEO Greg Boule. “Local manufacturers cannot compete sustainably if imported products bypass acceptable standards or enter the country under incorrect classifications.”

These developments sit within a broader national concern around illicit trade, dumping and under declaration, issues that extend beyond furniture manufacturing and continue to threaten South Africa’s wider industrial base. Recent plant closures across multiple manufacturing sectors have highlighted the economic and employment risks associated with weak enforcement and unfair import competition.

“If compliant manufacturers continue competing against illicit or dumped imports, we risk losing industrial capability altogether,” Boule explains. “This is no longer a sector issue. It is a national manufacturing issue.”

The initiative calls for strengthened customs enforcement, improved inspection capacity and coordinated multi agency action to protect legitimate businesses, safeguard employment and support sustainable local manufacturing growth.



**Why membership matters**

As implementation accelerates, industry participation becomes increasingly important. SAFI membership enables manufacturers to benefit directly from opportunities created through the Master Plan while contributing to sector transformation.

Members gain access to export readiness programmes and international trade missions, inclusion in national catalogues and buyer platforms, advocacy support on trade and localisation matters, access to funding pathways and industry intelligence, participation in skills development initiatives and increased visibility in both local and international markets.

Equally important, membership allows manufacturers to actively shape the future direction of the industry, says Boule: “Competitiveness and transformation cannot be achieved individually. Manufacturers who engage through SAFI strengthen both their own businesses and the sector as a whole.”

**A defining moment for manufacturers**

Global supply chains are shifting, regional markets are expanding and international buyers are actively diversifying sourcing destinations. South Africa’s furniture industry retains strong design capability, manufacturing expertise and raw material advantages.

The Furniture Industry Master Plan provides the structure needed to convert these strengths into sustainable growth, while SAFI’s ongoing work ensures implementation delivers measurable outcomes on the ground.

“The opportunity facing the sector today,” concludes Boule, “is not only to benefit from change, but to actively help rebuild and future proof South African furniture manufacturing.”

Released on behalf of SAFI (<https://furniture.org.za>) by the Line.



T A M B O

**AZTEC INFLUENCES MEET ICONIC BOHEMIAN STYLE**

Tambo blends Aztec influence with timeless Bohemian flair, drawing on global craftsmanship through a rich interplay of texture and pattern. A bold ikat ombre anchors the collection, while checkerboard weaves, rope embroidery, and embroidered stripes add layered depth. A palette spanning cactus greens to warm cinnabar tones enhances the individuality of each design, with flowing ombre effects bringing movement and visual intrigue throughout

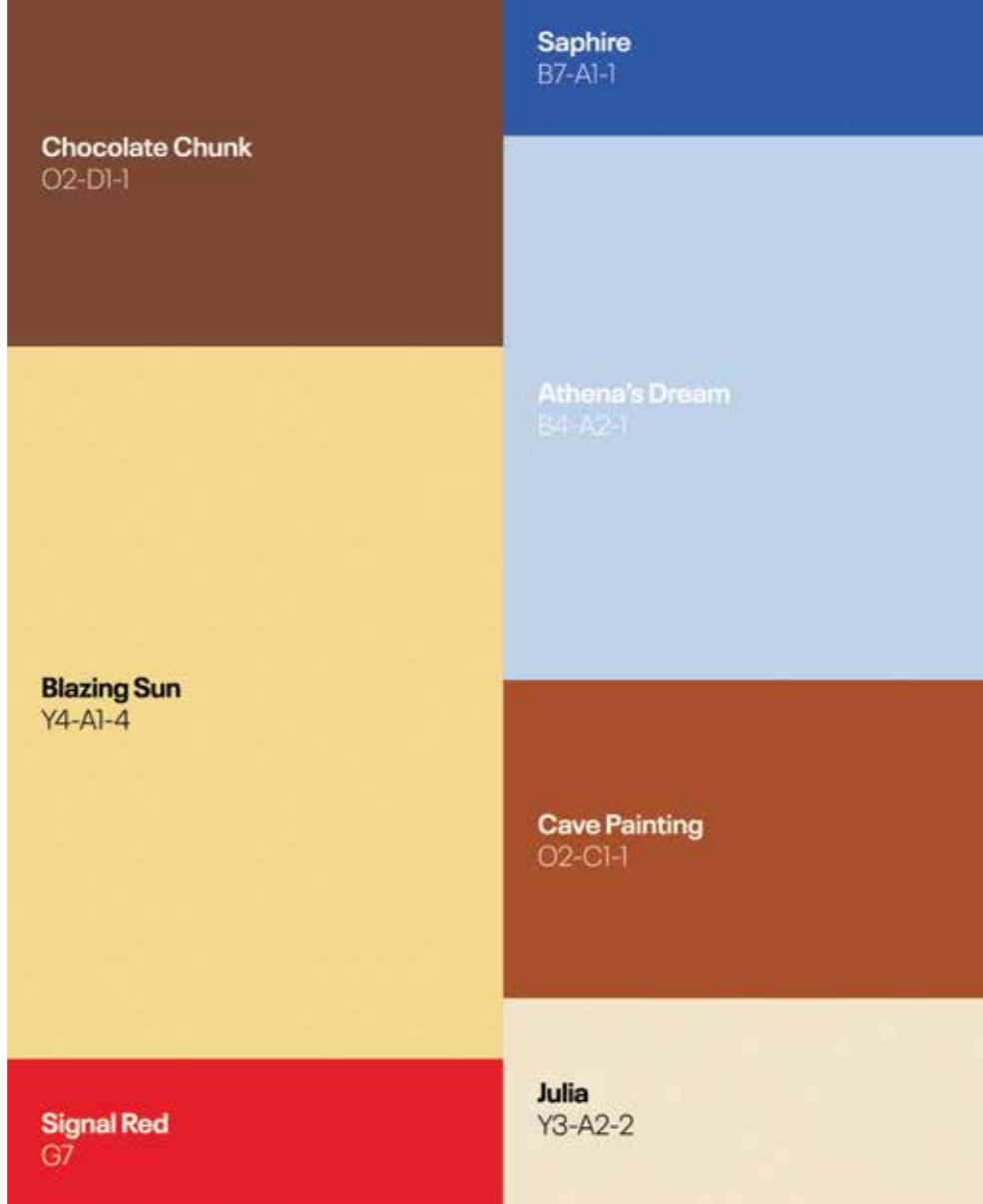
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The optimistic BUTTER + SKY “world” from Plascon’s 2026 Colour Forecast provides a breath of lightness to lift your mood

Expansive, uplifting and radiant, Butter + Sky celebrates light in all its forms. This “world” of colour is one of four inspiring worlds within Plascon’s ‘HAND, made’ themed Colour Forecast for 2026. Butter + Sky takes its cue from clear blue skies, golden blooms and sun-warmed walls. It’s a palette that invites serenity while inspiring optimism: airy, joyful and grounded in simple beauty.

Sitting alongside three other colour worlds (including Land + Sea, Fashion + Candy and Orchard + Blooms), Butter + Sky channels the human touch through shades that feel familiar yet refreshing. Where the 2026 forecast as a whole honours craftsmanship and individuality,



this particular world focuses on the art of light and how colour can transform a room through warmth, reflection and gentle contrast.

‘In a world that often feels complex, Butter + Sky returns us to a sense of ease,’ says Leslie Frank, Head of Marketing at Plascon. ‘These hues remind us that comfort can be found in simplicity, in sunlight and in the quiet joy of bringing colour to life by hand.’

Inspired by blue horizons and the golden tones of nature, the Butter + Sky palette blends radiant yellows with grounded neutrals and crisp, refreshing blues. Together, these shades form an optimistic story that balances energy with calm.

Blazing Sun (Y4-A1-4) brings the brightness of midday to interiors, infusing warmth and vitality. Julia (Y3-A2-2) softens that energy with a buttery glow, perfect for creating inviting spaces that feel both comforting and contemporary. Sapphire (B7-A1-1) and Athena’s Dream (B4-A2-1) evoke open skies and fresh air

- crisp blues that lend depth and clarity to a scheme.

To anchor these airy tones, Cave Painting (O2-C1-1) and Chocolate Chunk (O2-D1-1) add richness and tactility, reminiscent of handcrafted pottery or sunbaked clay. Finally, a spark of Signal Red (G7) provides an expressive accent that encourages a touch of individuality as a nod to the creative spirit behind the HAND, made theme.

Together, these hues create spaces that breathe optimism and calm in equal measure. Whether used in tonal harmony or as contrasting statements, Butter + Sky captures a sense of renewal, a little memo that colour, like light, has the power to lift us.

The pre-existing Plascon colours comprising this world have been carefully curated to reflect the spirit of the times. Each shade can be tinted in your choice of Plascon coating type at any leading retailer, ready for you to bring your own HAND, made story to life. dw

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## Designing the Lee Gold Music Store

A Space Where Every Instrument Tells a Story  
approach to Interior Design

When approached to design the new Lee Gold Music store in Port Elizabeth, the brief was clear yet ambitious: transform a former sparse, glass-walled car showroom into a vast retail destination that celebrates music in every detail. This was not simply a shop fit-out - it was about reimagining an empty shell and creating a dynamic journey where each product zone feels like a boutique within the store, with every design decision reinforcing Lee Gold's brand identity.

### An Open Shell of Possibilities

The starting point was a raw, double-volume showroom space — expansive and filled with potential. While the sheer scale offered creative freedom, it also posed unique challenges: how to humanise the



vastness, control acoustics, and intuitively guide customers through different product categories. The solution was to break the space into a series of immersive "store-within-a-store" zones - each with its own design language, yet all seamlessly woven into a cohesive customer journey.

### A Giant Guitar as the Heartbeat

At the core of the design concept was an architectural feature that symbolises the store's essence - a giant abstract guitar. The ground floor layout was shaped to mimic a guitar body, while the staircase leading to the mezzanine was designed as the guitar strings, both functional and sculptural. This bold gesture grounds the space in Lee Gold's musical roots while creating a memorable first impression.

### Creating Experiential Zones

Every product category was crafted as its own journey. In the piano section, a flowing pathway styled as musical notes leads customers through a gallery-like showcase of grand pianos. The guitar zone contrasts with soft, timber-lined curves that echo the form of the instruments and draw visitors seamlessly into the adjoining drum area.

The high-end guitar sound room shifts the mood entirely - imagined as a time capsule where antique display cabinets meet bold contemporary details, including a lime green Chesterfield and a custom Fender-branded coffee table. Soundproofed and enclosed with a glass door, it offers a private environment where customers can test premium guitars undisturbed. The result is an intimate space that invites visitors to pause, linger, and connect.



### Weaving Brand Colours into the Space

A key part of the design narrative was the subtle yet deliberate use of Lee Gold's brand colours - black, blue, and yellow. These colours were not merely decorative accents but were integrated into architectural elements to strengthen brand presence. Custom-designed pay points became visual anchors, incorporating the brand palette through bespoke cabinetry and detailing. Floor finishes and feature wall treatments were carefully selected to introduce layers of these colours, ensuring they complemented the overall material palette of natural timbers, matte blacks, and metallics without overwhelming the instruments on display.

### The Result

The Lee Gold Music store has been transformed into a dynamic, experiential retail destination that is far more than a place to purchase instruments. Located at the entrance to Moffett Retail Park in Port Elizabeth, it stands as a destination in its own right - a space that invites exploration, connection, and discovery, with every design choice reinforcing the brand's passion for music and its community legacy.

For me, as interior designer Glendene Brody of Simplicity by Design, this



project was an opportunity to merge functionality with storytelling - shaping a space where architecture, brand, and emotion harmonise. The Lee Gold Music store is both a landmark within the city and an example of how thoughtful design

can turn an empty shell into a destination that truly sings. dw

[www.simplicitybydesign.co.za](http://www.simplicitybydesign.co.za)  
[www.iidprofessions.org.za](http://www.iidprofessions.org.za)

## Why Being Part of the IID Matters More Than Ever

Your Voice. Our Industry. One Collective Future.

In a country rich with creative talent and diverse design perspectives, South African interior designers, decorators, and interior architects are making waves across the continent. But in a fast-changing industry, talent alone is no longer enough. To truly elevate the profession and protect it, we need to stand together. That is where the

South African Institute of the Interior Design Professions (IID) comes in.

The IID is the only professional body representing interior design, interior architecture, and interior decorating in South Africa. And being a member is not just a nice-to-have, it is essential.



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INSTITUTE OF THE  
INTERIOR DESIGN  
PROFESSIONS

## KSA update, April 2026.

### Comparing your stone kitchen countertop options

**W**hen looking at the best stone kitchen countertop solution for you, each material should be weighed against these criteria:

- Durability vs repairability
- Moisture behaviour (porous vs non-porous)
- Heat resistance
- Movement and stability
- Aesthetics (natural vs controlled design)
- Cost vs lifespan
- Installation complexity and risk
- User behaviour (your lifestyle)

Let's start with **natural stone**, specifically granite, marble and quartzite, which are the most usual to be considered for a kitchen countertop.

All three are exceptionally durable, with quartzite and marble usually



being 'softer' than granite. All have heat resistant properties, but hot pots should never be placed directly on them, a trivet should be used, as the extreme change in temperature can put the material into thermal shock causing it to crack.

These materials are completely unique - no two slabs are the same. For this reason, you should always inspect the full slab and never make your choice off a small sample in case the slab has a unique colour or pattern that does not appeal to you. This uniqueness is something that should be celebrated in natural stone and should be a key feature to it.

All natural stone is porous, meaning it needs to be sealed to stop it staining and absorbing moisture. To keep the material looking its best and at its most durable you should arrange for your fabricator to reseal at least once a year. If maintained well and sealed regularly, natural stone will have a very long lifespan. As a rule, lighter varieties of the stone are more porous, and granite tends to be less porous than marble and quartzite.

The big risk here is that the material itself is not warrantied. As it is an all-natural material it is impossible to determine any micro fissure and cracks that may exist in the stone that could lead to damage over time. Usually only the

installation has a warranty and not the material.

#### Quartz (Engineered Stone)

This is a man-made, semi natural product because it is made using natural materials. This allows for it to have more consistency of colour and pattern than natural stone.

It is mostly non-porous and is usually sealed during the manufacturing process, but it can be susceptible to high pigment stains like red wine, coffee, beetroot etc. It is important to note that you should never seal a quartz product without sign-off from the manufacturer as this could void your warranty.

It is also easy to clean and maintain.

While it too has heat resistant properties, the resin content can lead to scorch marks or thermal shock. The resin content can also mean that in areas where there is high humidity and harsh sunlight, over time the material can discolour.

There are concerns about the Silica content of the material. This does not make it dangerous once installed, but it can cause harm to those fabricating it if proper safety protocols are not followed. You should not allow it to be cut indoors or on site unless everyone present is wearing masks. There are now brands

available with reduced Silica content, but these are proving more challenging to fabricate.

#### Porcelain / Sintered Stone

This material is extremely heat resistant as it has been kiln-fired. It is also non-porous, does not need sealing and is UV stable so will not discolour. It comes in a much thinner format, making it more suitable to the slim line model aesthetic, but this does mean that good substrate support is a must which adds to the cost. The 6mm version is not suited to countertop application but rather for cladding. The 12mm can technically be used for countertops without a substrate but in South Africa, where so many homes have walls and floors out of square, it is advisable to use a substrate like marine ply or PVC board which is moisture resistant and can move with the porcelain.

This material can be challenging to fabricate as it is brittle so it can crack and chip while being cut. This brittle nature also makes it susceptible to chipping or cracking when something is bumped against it or dropped onto it.

You get various levels of porcelain - first where the pattern is only printed on the top horizontal plain and the

underside is white. This type is only suitable for basic installations where there are not complex joints or angles. The second type is where the pattern is only on the surface, but the rest of the material is coloured to a match the main colour of the pattern. Here you can do more complex installations, but you will see the colour not the pattern on the joint. The most expensive versions have the pattern running the full way through the material. These are most suited to complex installations with mitred joints and edges.

On the whole, this material is more expensive to buy and install. Complex installations should only be undertaken by fabricators with experience with the specific material chosen.

The important thing to consider with Porcelain is your lifestyle. This material is beautiful but if you live a more robust lifestyle where kids sit on countertops, you do a lot of entertaining, you have domestic help - you may want to consider if it is the right choice for you.

Whichever material you prefer, the addition of stone surfacing to your kitchen will enhance its value and its aesthetic. It is a worthwhile investment. dw

[www.ksa.co.za](http://www.ksa.co.za)



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The Kitchen Specialists  
ASSOCIATION

altreforme presents  
LOVE&RELOVE

A bespoke service introducing a new responsibility in design: enabling what already exists to evolve

During Milan Design Week 2026, altreforme presents LOVE&RELOVE, a project that redefines the concept of personalisation, and positions furniture as a dynamic system, conceived to adapt, transform and endure over time. More than a service, LOVE&RELOVE expresses a vision: recognising the value of an object and allowing it to evolve alongside those who live with it.

“The idea stems from the awareness that, while remaining faithful to the brand’s values, tastes and needs can change. LOVE&RELOVE offers the possibility to renew existing pieces, allowing clients to fall in love again with what they once chose,” says Valentina Fontana, CEO of Fontana Group and the driving force behind altreforme, the design brand that shapes metal sheets into bold, distinctive furniture. Since 2009,



altreforme has treated aluminium as a haute couture textile, through a sartorial approach giving rise to a distinctive expressive language: complex surfaces, tactile finishes, sophisticated chromatic treatments and custom decorations that define a distinctive aesthetic.

The project originates from the evolution of Sartoria, altreforme’s longstanding bespoke service, and represents its natural progression: from personalisation as an initial choice to personalisation as an ongoing possibility.

LOVE marks the beginning - the moment when an idea takes shape through a design dialogue between altreforme, clients, architects and designers, giving rise to unique pieces or bespoke solutions. RELOVE represents continuity - the possibility to modify, adapt and reinterpret it over time.

“LOVE&RELOVE was conceived as a concrete alternative to the production of new items,” continues Valentina Fontana. “In a time characterised by accelerated consumption, we felt the need to propose a counterintuitive service - one that accompanies shifts in taste and lifestyle without severing the bond with the object. What evolves is not only the piece itself, but the relationship we have with it.”

Furniture is thus no longer fixed, becoming a material in flux. Dimensions, surfaces and functions can be recalibrated, responding to changing spatial contexts and needs, without losing identity - rather reinforcing it.

At the core of LOVE&RELOVE lies a responsible and pragmatic approach to sustainability: not to interrupt the life cycle of objects, but to extend it. Aluminium - inherently

durable and fully recyclable - becomes the ideal medium for this process, capable of accommodating multiple design possibilities without losing its value.

“This service enables intervention on existing furniture - from repainting and refinishing to resizing and restoration - offering renewed aesthetic and functional possibilities,” adds Valentina Fontana. “At the same time, it acknowledges the value of the material itself: aluminium can be recovered and reintroduced into the production cycle. It is a way to counter a disposable culture and to approach design with greater responsibility, without compromising creative freedom.”

For Milan Design Week 2026, altreforme presents LOVE&RELOVE in a temporary space at Via Solferino 32, conceived as a narrative environment where the project unfolds as an experience. A selection of iconic pieces will engage with production processes and new interpretations, revealing the evolving potential of design.

In parallel, the High Heels console, created in collaboration with Yazbukey, will be exhibited as part of L’Appartamento at Palazzo Donizetti, within the project curated by Artemest.

[www.moossopr.com](http://www.moossopr.com)





El Departamento designs Nude Project's new Berlin flagship:  
an ode to nightlife hedonism and kitsch aesthetics



Architecture and interior design studio El Departamento is behind the new Nude Project flagship store in Berlin, an irreverent space that defies contemporary retail conventions.

Inspired by the iconic entrepreneur Rolf Eden and the inherited luxury of 1970s Berlin nightlife, the project intertwines fashion and spatial narrative through an unapologetically kitsch aesthetic.

Led by Marina Martín and Alberto Eltini, El Departamento has designed the streetwear brand's new flagship at Alte Schönhauser Straße 28. The space is conceived as an aesthetic manifesto that engages in a dialogue with the complex cultural identity of the German capital, adapting Nude Project's provocative essence to the local context without losing its core identity. By eschewing normative minimalism, the interior architecture articulates a powerful visual universe where decadent opulence, daring materiality, and community experience converge.



**Pleasure as infrastructure**

To conceptualise the new store, El Departamento's creative team began with an in-depth exploration of the local cultural context. The goal was to adapt the essence of Nude Project - often linked to the traditional Macho Ibérico archetype - into the Berlin imaginary. They found their answer in the "Typical German Alpha," personified by Rolf Eden. This actor, entrepreneur, and owner of Berlin's most iconic 70s and 80s nightclubs serves as the narrative thread for an aesthetic proposal dubbed "Nude Project Die Dynastie".

The project distances itself from the contemporary clichés of the city's nightlife, rescuing instead an older logic where clubs were meticulously controlled environments and luxury was assumed as a non-negotiable condition. Within this space, pleasure is treated as infrastructure: lighting, sound, and furniture operate as elements that regulate behavior and atmosphere. This translates

into a carefully curated selection of materials that reclaims this vibe: heavy velvets, ubiquitous burl wood, densely patterned curtains, and carpets that build an irreverent, deliberately kitsch environment.

**An immersive journey in three acts**

The store's interior architecture is organised as a sequence of spaces with distinct visual identities. The journey begins in the Main Lounge, a reception area dominated by the extensive use of burl wood on the walls and furniture, evoking the retro luxury of past decades. Technical lighting and an imposing integrated speaker system take centre stage. The brand's urban aesthetic bursts into the space through a large graffiti-style canvas positioned over the black counter. Simultaneously, its playful spirit materialises in elements such as an arcade machine and a large central display designed to mimic a constantly spinning vinyl record.

Passing through large red neon portals and under mirrored ceilings, the visitor enters The Library, conceived as a zone of transition and luxury. The flooring changes radically, introducing a green carpet with an exuberant botanical pattern. In this room, the studio has designed a custom fireplace inspired by vintage references, framing it between wooden shelving to bring a domestic scale to the space. Acting as more than just a decorative element, it cleverly conceals a radiator to provide real, functional warmth. Furthermore, the strategic use of mirrors on the ceilings and walls amplifies the richness of the textures, creating an immersive visual interplay.

The project's scenographic climax is reached at the back of the store, in The Forbidden Room. Here, extravagance reaches its highest expression in a room dyed an intense crimson red. The walls, upholstered in elegant brown vertical channel tufting, embrace a striking black grand piano that serves as an unexpected





display table for garments—all crowned by a spectacular red crystal chandelier suspended from a mirrored ceiling. Irreverence also takes over the fitting room area, dubbed the "Ego Amplifier," where leopard-print carpeting and heavy velvet curtains contrast with messages of punk rebellion written on the mirrors. This is a direct nod to the subcultures and alternative scenes that have historically defined Berlin, seamlessly connecting with the free and transgressive spirit that forms the DNA of Nude Project.

#### SUPPLIERS

- **General Contractor:** Triangular
- **Furniture Design:** El Departamento
- **Furniture Manufacturing / Joinery:** Triangular
- **Textiles / Soft Furnishings:** Deco & You
- **Main Hall Flooring:** Tarkett
- **Patterned Carpet Flooring:** Ege Carpets
- **Maroon Carpet Flooring:** Balsan
- **Custom Mirrors:** Triangular
- **Integrated Speakers:** Triangular
- **Custom Rug:** Triangular
- **Architectural Lighting:** Ilumisa
- **Decorative Lighting:** Vintage 

[www.eldepartamento.net](http://www.eldepartamento.net)



## Pull up a Chair



## Pull Up A Chair

by Stenie Greyling

**C**hairs are more than functional objects; they are cultural artifacts, design statements and tools for well-being. They are among the most familiar yet fascinating objects in our daily lives.

From ancient thrones to sleek office chairs, they reflect human needs, creativity and social structures.

Chairs in 2026 are about storytelling and sustainability. They are designed to be lived in, not just looked at – bringing warmth, individuality and eco-consciousness into homes and workplaces.

No design element is more universal than the chair. While its basic body-supporting functionality has hardly changed, the chair has seen countless interpretations that encompass ever-evolving tastes, material, technologies and ideologies. All of which have made this practical domestic necessity, at its best, an emblem of status, style and artistry.

The seating in a home is arguably one of the most important elements of furnishing it. When choosing which chair for the dining room one wants to enjoy a meal in or which upholstered seat one wants to sink into, style and comfort are



usually the top priorities. But if one is hoping to create a space that feels more curated and thoughtfully designed, the types of chairs chosen can make all the difference in the final look and feel.

Latest chair trends for 2026 emphasise soft, organic and sculptural forms that promote comfort and movement. Key styles feature textured fabric like bouclé, bold jewel-tone colours, and natural wood, often in compact designs for modern living spaces. Key trends also include multifunctional, ergonomic and sustainable materials.

### Material and Texture.

The move toward authenticity demands materials that engage all the senses – aim

to the touch, beautiful to look at and naturally textured.

- **Warm, Characterful Woods:** Darker, richer woods are taking centre stage, particularly walnut and smoked oak. The emphasis is on showing the woods' natural grain and imperfections. This adds a sense of permanence and history to even the newest pieces.
- **Texture Layering:** Texture is king! We are seeing a mix of-highly tactile fabrics used in upholstery.
- **Chenille, Velvet and Mohair.** These are highly sophisticated and add immediate warmth, moving past the overuse of basic cottons.

- **Linen and Natural Weaves.** Priced for their relaxed, yet refined look, these natural materials create that sought-after 'lived-in' feeling.

### Ergonomics and Health.

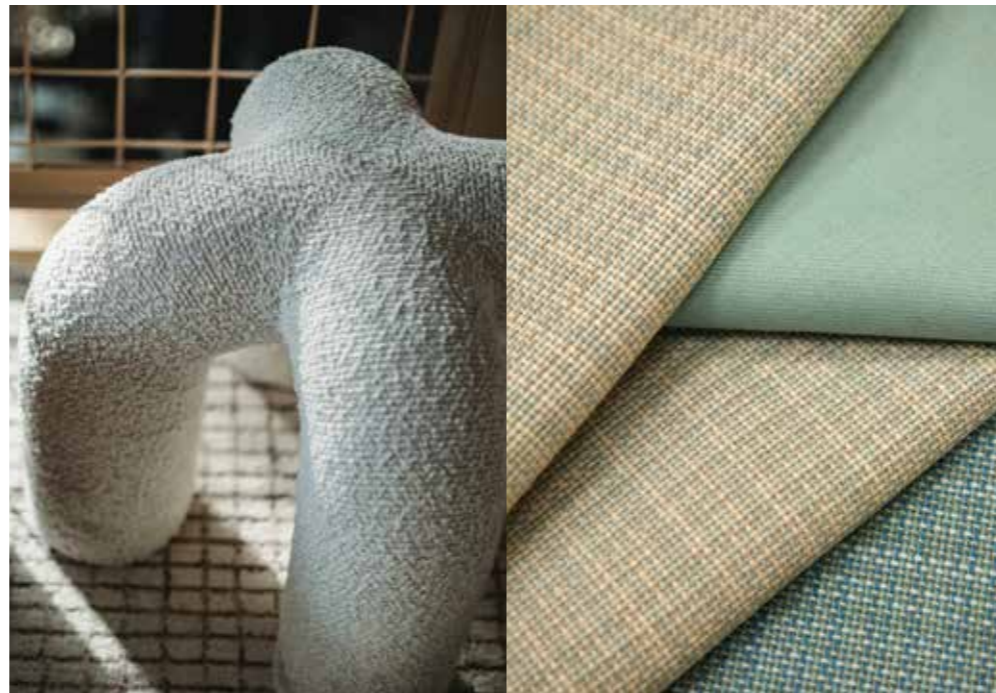
Modern research emphasises the importance of ergonomically designed chairs to prevent musculoskeletal issues. Poor seating can lead to back pain, neck strain and poor posture, while well-designed chairs enhance comfort and productivity.

### The History of the Chair.

This dates back a long way: hieroglyphics and archaeological finds unearthed in Egypt tell the story. In the

West, the chair appeared as early as the classical era, continuing through the Middle Ages and up to the Renaissance, when it was no longer the preserve of a select few, but began to spread more and more.

During this period, the specific architectural styles of each area began to emerge, with the Italian, French, and English schools, which the entire world looked to. However, it is to the early 20th century that we owe the concept of the chair, which remains a point of reference today, and it was precisely in the 20th century that this piece of furniture became the object of experimentation and innovation in form, function and production. dw



## Cattelan Italia presents the curvy module of the Craig sofa

Design: Maurizio Manzoni

The rounded, sinuous silhouettes of Craig embrace new shapes. Designed to adapt to linear compositions and corner or chaise longue solutions, Craig by Cattelan Italia evolves in a new curvy configuration.

The rounded or squared versions have been supplemented by the curved element, which allows the seat to be moved away from the wall and the sofa to be positioned in the centre of the room.

Officially presented as new for 2026 at the Salone del Mobile. Milano, the enveloping backrest, which accommodates the cushions and creates a continuous, three-dimensional volume, curves even further. This design

feature organises space and expands the sofa's compositional possibilities in contemporary living room décor.

The introduction of the curvy element interrupts the symmetry of the linear modular system and extends its design flexibility, fostering sociability and optimising the layout for vis-à-vis conversation among guests.

Without compromising the modularity of the system and preserving its essence, even in the new curved shape, the armrest remains the element of strong recognisability: it maintains its structural and formal role, reinforcing the continuity of the profile and accentuating the sense of enclosure.

In open-plan environments or in architectures characterised by fluid floor plans, the curved module allows functional areas to be divided by the shape of the sofa itself, without the introduction of dividing elements.

This range extension represents a conscious design evolution for Cattelan Italia, which consolidates the identity of the Craig system and extends its creative and functional potential. The introduction of the curve is not a stylistic variation, but the expression of an approach geared towards versatility, contemporary ways of living and dialogue with domestic architecture.

dw

[www.cavalleri.com](http://www.cavalleri.com)



## et al. introduces Nuy

The new chair designed by Marco Acerbis

**W**ith Nuy, Marco Acerbis interprets the vision of et al. and turns it into a product. In this chair, the company's philosophy becomes a material, structural and shared experience.

The design stems from the idea of an inverted "Y", a structural and symbolic sign that defines the ash wood frame. It is not a graphic element, but a precise building choice: it focuses the shape, shares the loads and roots the chair in space. The geometry gathers downwards, creating balance and stability.

An immediately recognisable shape, able to express solidity: the same one with which et al. affirms its identity as a company that believes in itself.

The project takes shape through a conscious reduction. Clean lines, calibrated proportions and visible joints

build a design that does not seek effect, but precision. The wood defines the object's frame, its architectural character and its relationship to the ambience, while process with CNC machines tells of an advanced, sustainable production approach, clearly looking towards the future.


The upholstered part fits onto this structure: generous thicknesses and ergonomic shapes accommodate the body in a natural way, letting in a softness which dialogues with the stricness of wood and enhances its expressiveness.

The result is a chair that combines technique and perception: a meeting point between structure and comfort, where sitting down finds its essence again.

Expression of a "new us", of an identity that is strengthened and renewed through a project, Nuy by Marco Acerbis reflects

this attitude. A deliberately self-centred but also inclusive choice that reveals a courageous intent: the brand steps forward to place people back at the centre, giving a human soul to the product. As a result an object naturally aligned to the spirit of et al. is born: confident, welcoming, bold in looking ahead and open to relationships.

A formal direction that also reveals a design and entrepreneurial purpose, reflecting a clear and determined will to manufacture a product with a strong identity.

Placing a 'new us' at the centre means making the company's values concrete: believe in its own identity, recognise hospitality as natural field and looking to the future with courage, states Francesca Tonti, CEO of et al. 

[www.et-al.it/en](http://www.et-al.it/en)



## B.E.L.T.

Bespoke. Exclusivity. Luxury. by Turri.

Inspired by the woven leather belt, which becomes a symbol of the brand's artisanal tradition, the B.E.L.T. collection by Turri, designed by Matteo Nunziati, takes its cue from this iconic detail. The "belt", the result of skilled leather craftsmanship, is the distinguishing element of the entire project: a feature that transforms the sofa into a contemporary piece, capable of reinterpreting traditional know-how in a modern key.

Large rectangular volumes reveal sophisticated elegance through carefully considered proportions and precious details: tailored edges, leather piping, finely selected fabrics, and soft, meticulously balanced forms with an almost architectural precision. Comfort is further expressed through plush padded cushions, resting on a structure that seems to float lightly, ready to offer a warm and welcoming embrace.

For B.E.L.T., Matteo Nunziati chose a woven leather belt as the signature element of the collection. It wraps the generous armrests, containing the volume with a measured and functional gesture, enriched with an elegant buckle personalised with the company's "T" monogram.

With a subtle yet strongly identifiable touch, B.E.L.T. evokes the world of bespoke leather goods and transforms the sofa into a contemporary collectible object.

"I was inspired by the 19th-century art of crafting travel trunks," explains designer Matteo Nunziati. «B.E.L.T. was born from a reflection on the culture of journey and place, and on the evolution of a functional object that can speak the language of elegance», Nunziati concludes.

The design of B.E.L.T. engages in a dialogue between proportions and



details: from the large modular elements that offer compositional freedom, to the carefully considered features ensuring coherence, quality, and exclusivity. Even the collection's accessories, such as the integrated leather-covered coffee table, are part of an open and flexible system, exemplifying the highest level of bespoke craftsmanship while remaining in line with a refined and timeless aesthetic.

B.E.L.T. made-to-measure by Turri. Perfect for everyday living.

[www.turri.it](http://www.turri.it)



## Ethimo and Elena Salmistraro

Loop, the endlessly flowing sofa that reworks our relationship with outdoor spaces

Ethimo and Elena Salmistraro present Loop, a sofa that blends the Ethimo outdoor design experience with the visionary creativity of Elena Salmistraro to transform the concept of seating into a dynamic, fluid 'sculpture' that invites numerous interpretations.

Conceived to go beyond its traditional function, the volumes that make up Loop combine in equilibrium to form an endless embrace of shapes. Its very name hints at an idea of continuity and natural rhythm, one that 'loops' back on itself, welcomes, connects, and holds together, just like the relationships it prompts. A free, spontaneous user experience, open to so many possibilities.

"Loop was conceived more as an organism than a simple piece of furniture. It is an outdoor sofa with a fluid body, built out of organic volumes that come together and support each other, creating a continuous movement that is natural, almost instinctive. Says Elena Salmistraro. This is not a sofa in the classic sense of the word, nor is it conventional seating. It is, rather, a fertile borderline, a hybrid shape that shuns hierarchies, preordained attitudes and univocal interpretations."

Loop is accessible from any side and its configuration does away with the

distinction between front and back, prompting spontaneous use not only of the seat, but also of the surrounding area.

Its sinuous design invites sharing, a sofa for meeting and spending time together, rather than just sitting. This allows Loop to become a spectacular, autonomous presence, generating a sense of spontaneous relationships between people as it dialogues with its setting.

The new three-seater sofa is self-bearing, defined solely by its technical padding instead of a visible structure. Featuring high-performance upholstery for outdoor living, with a soft comfortable hand, Loop takes on shape and substance thanks to its very material. A sinuous silhouette emphasises its welcoming nature, while the three different fabric options amplify its personality, allowing it to adapt effortlessly to different surroundings.

Loop is available in two different colourways: one inspired by the earth with warm hues ranging from red to rust that recall Mediterranean landscapes, and the other inspired by the sea, with shades of sky blue and sea green that recall a scenic coastline.

Ideal for furnishing residential spaces, where it becomes a soft 'presence' for socialising, bringing personality to



outdoor locations, this sofa is also the perfect solution for hospitality and contract projects, where it acquires a more theatrical dimension and helps to define the character of any space. Loop can, consequently, become the main player in any outdoor location or dialogue with other seating elements, standing out in any case thanks to its strong, instantly recognisable presence.

With Loop, what goes around, comes around: people, conversations, even space, lending shape to a new form of outdoor socialising, freer and more fluid. A project that embodies the Ethimo aptitude for continual exploration of new ways of enjoying nature, where design and conviviality come together in an enjoyable loop.


[www.ethimo.com](http://www.ethimo.com)



## ABOUT ELITIS

by St Leger And Viney

**D**are to be bold, innovative and act as explorers in the field of furnishings fabrics and wallcoverings, this is Elitis' philosophy. They design contemporary products that always have an edge on the latest techniques and materials. Elitis' in house design department is a hive of activity like that of an experimental laboratory, which traces the lines of research diversity and innovative mixtures.

Elitis Fabrics & Wallcoverings are available from St Leger & Viney. 

[www.stleger.co.za](http://www.stleger.co.za)



*Ikumi fabric features on the chair, whilst Hiro features as drapery and Masaki as the round cushion.*

*Fabric on the chair is Miki in colour Liombre du fil, from Elitis' new fabric collection Kanoko.*



*Hila from Elitis' fabric Hila is featured on the chair with Documenta as drapery.*

Good design is not defined by where it is made, but by how it lives.

by Maldini

For over two decades, Maldini has curated Italian furniture for Southern African spaces, selecting pieces not for their Italian origin alone, but for their ability to fit in with the ways we live here.

Maldini works closely with architects, interior designers and developers shaping new residential and mixed-use environments, where furniture is not an afterthought, but part of the architectural intent.

In a market where access to international design has become increasingly commonplace, the role of curation has shifted. The question is no longer what can be imported, but what should be placed where and why. This is particularly true within new developments, where consistency, proportion and material dialogue need to be considered early, not retrofitted at procurement stage.

Maldini's edit is built on this principle. Each brand and piece is selected with precision, contributing to a broader



composition that allows designers to work with contrast, balance and restraint.


The Craig Sofa by Cattelan Italia reflects this architectural approach. Defined by structure and proportion, it brings clarity to a space, less a piece of furniture and more a framework around which a room is resolved. In contrast, the Louis Armchair by Porada introduces warmth and material depth, grounded in craftsmanship and organic form. It does not compete for attention, but holds it over time. The Ribbon Armchair by Qeeboo shifts the tone entirely, introducing colour and a sense of play, where form becomes

expressive and the room takes on a different energy.

Together, these pieces demonstrate the range of the Maldini edit, from sculptural restraint to enduring form, with moments of spontaneity that prevent a space from becoming predictable.

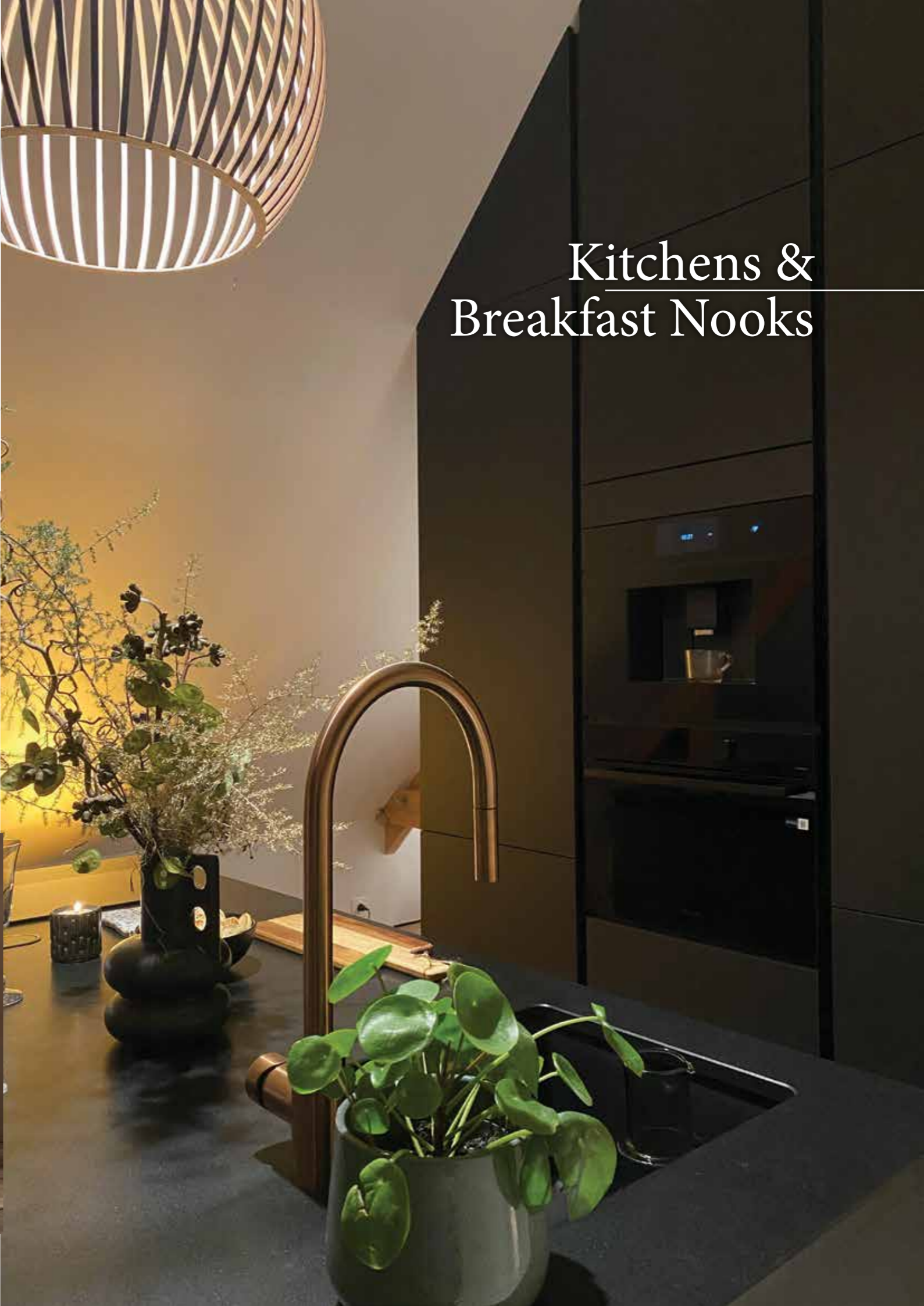
Maldini supports projects from concept through to installation.

The intention is not to furnish everything, but to be specified where it matters.

Book an appointment with Maldini's Lead Curator, Simone Blumberg. 

[www.maldini.co.za](http://www.maldini.co.za)

## Kitchens & Breakfast Nooks





The kitchen has always been more than a place to cook; it's the beating heart of the home.

by Stienie Greyling



**I**n 2026, kitchens are evolving into multifunctional spaces that balance design, technology and sustainability. They are not just about preparing meals, they are about creating experiences, fostering connection and reflecting personal values.

Kitchen design in 2026 is all about warmth, personality and sustainability. The sterile, all-white kitchens of the past are fading, replaced by natural wood, earthy tones, curved silhouettes and smart yet cosy layouts.

One of the biggest shifts in kitchen design is the integration of the kitchen with the wider living space. Open-plan kitchen layouts remain popular, but the distinction between 'kitchen' and 'living area' is becoming increasingly blurred. Expect to see fitted kitchen furniture extending beyond the kitchen zone to include living room cabinetry, bar areas and display storage in matching finishes.

Hard curves are softening, with a noticeable shift towards gently curved kitchens units, rounded breakfast bars

and organic island shapes. These flowing forms add visual interest and a more relaxed ambience to contemporary kitchens.

Rustic minimalism is set to be the leading kitchen aesthetic for 2026. It is a style that combines clean-lined layouts with the warmth and texture of natural materials – think oak and walnut cabinetry, smoke glass accents, and brushed handles.

The rise of 'wood drenching' – where walls, cabinets and trims are finished in matching wood tones – is a bold evolution of this trend.

**On trend colours for 2026 include:**

- Earthy beiges
- Charcoal black
- Smoky greys
- Burnt ochre and clay tones.

These grounded tones promote a sense of warmth and connection to nature while pairing effortlessly with metallic accents and tactile stone or quartz worktops.

Lighting is no longer just a practical consideration. Kitchen lighting this year is layered, programmable and part of the design language. Designers are using lighting to enhance materials, define zones and create ambience at the touch of a button.

**Expect to see:**

- LED strip lighting under cabinets, shelves and plinths.
- Integrated lighting in larders and tall units.
- Smart lighting systems with app or voice control.

Combine warm and cool lighting to shift the mood from functional to relaxed, especially in kitchens that serve as entertaining spaces.

With a move toward minimalism and multifunctional layouts, kitchen appliances are being increasingly concealed. Expect to see handleless kitchen remain strong in 2026, with integrated appliances, push-to-open doors and matching cabinetry for fridges and dishwashers.

Continuous splashbacks act as a cohesive backdrop that ties the entire room together, visually elongating and seamlessly framing the space. Sleek and sophisticated, these splashbacks are becoming a defining feature to bespoke kitchens.

Used to elevate sinks and cooking zones, elegantly structured architecture surrounds are the perfect blend of form and functionality. Whilst wonderfully easy to clean, they also offer the opportunity to introduce natural materials, creating a

stylish and harmonious finish across the kitchen.

As kitchens continue to become flooded with character and personality, worktops are growing bolder and more expressive. Generously veined marbles, quartz and granites are especially sought after for their sculptural, mesmerising patterns that bring a touch of natural artistry into the space. Blending practicality and art, these statement surfaces offer a creative way to infuse a kitchen with individuality.

As kitchens evolve into more comfortable, personalised spaces, small luxuries such as bespoke home bars and dedicated breakfast stations are becoming popular features that truly elevate everyday living. From mirrored cocktail cabinets to discreet coffee stations, these effortlessly functional yet gorgeously indulgent touches to a home are a way of bringing everyone together, encouraging meaningful conversation and connection over a glass of wine or a delightfully crafted cocktail.





## Acoustic comfort is in the kitchen with Virgola Comfort

**A**coustic comfort can effectively contribute to improving the quality of life in the kitchen: by reducing noise and reverberation, it creates a more relaxing and welcoming atmosphere, promoting domestic well-being.

An optimal sound level also contributes to reducing stress, enhancing concentration during daily activities and making social moments even more enjoyable.

Always attentive to this aspect, Falmec has updated one of its best-selling products, the Virgola undercabinet hood, introducing the new Virgola Touch Comfort and Virgola No-Drop Comfort models. Thanks to the latest technology, this model has been refined to ensure a quieter and more comfortable experience, while maintaining the same high level of performance.

The distinctive feature of the two new Virgola models is a soundproof chamber with noise-absorbing material, which significantly improves acoustic comfort. Two optional accessories are available for the filter version: the duct, which is also filter-equipped, and a dedicated deflector,




designed to further reduce noise during hood operation.

Virgola Touch Comfort stands out for its touch control panel integrated into the front panel, which can be opened and rotated: this solution allows you to control all the hood's functions without having to open the wall cabinet door, while protecting the lower edge from fumes and vapours.

The Virgola anti-condensation 'No-Drop' model, on the other hand, features a series of cross-bladed technopolymer filters designed to trap condensing vapours, especially when using induction hobs. In the new Virgola No-Drop Comfort, vapours slide down an inclined channel and are then collected in a removable tray that is easy to empty and clean.

Virgola, in its different versions, is available in Scotch Brite stainless steel or black painted finishes, and in multiple sizes (60, 75, 90, 120 cm) to offer solutions suitable for every aesthetic and space requirement.

The hood is also equipped with dynamic lighting to adapt the colour temperature to the desired atmosphere, and dimmable lighting to adjust the light intensity in the room.

Finally, in filtering mode, it guarantees maximum efficiency thanks to the special long-lasting Carbon.Zeo Microtech regenerative filters. 

[www.falmec.com](http://www.falmec.com)

## Decoration and Performance

Wall/Pepper® wallpapers reinterpret bathroom and kitchen spaces

Wall/Pepper® wallpapers redefine the concept of decoration in environments most exposed to water, steam, and humidity - such as bathrooms, wellness areas, and kitchens - thanks to the WP/H2O material, a solution that combines technological research, performance, and creative freedom.

WP/H2O is a water-repellent, high-density fibreglass wall covering that, when combined with the WallSilk® Antibacterial Bi two-component protective finish, ensures durable, safe, and easily washable surfaces. The presence of silver salts also helps make surfaces antibacterial,



promoting more hygienic and healthier environments.

In bathroom settings, wallpapers can be applied not only to traditional walls but also to existing tiles, inside shower enclosures, behind sanitary fixtures, or around bath tubs, offering a continuous and highly customisable decorative solution.

Likewise, in the kitchen, WP/H2O represents an ideal solution for covering walls exposed to splashes, steam, and temperature fluctuations, such as splashbacks and surfaces near worktops.

By combining functionality and aesthetics, WP/H2O introduces textures, colours, and graphics - also custom-made - into the most complex environments, without compromising resistance, hygiene, and ease of maintenance. A solution that expresses true design freedom, capable of transforming bathrooms and kitchens into distinctive, personalised spaces with a strong aesthetic impact, backed by the guaranteed quality of Wall/Pepper®. dw

[www.wallpeppergroup.com](http://www.wallpeppergroup.com)



## Breakfast Nooks

by Stenie Greyling

A breakfast nook is a cosy, dining space – often tucked into a corner or near a window that blends functionality with comfort, making mornings feel more inviting.

It can be styled to suit any home, from rustic farmhouse to sleek modern minimalism, and often doubles as a versatile spot for family activities beyond meals.

There is something undeniably charming about a breakfast nook. More than just a place to eat, it's a corner of the home where sunlight, comfort and togetherness converge.

Historically, breakfast nooks emerged in the early 20th century as a way to maximise small kitchen spaces. Families want a casual spot for quick meals, separate from the more formal dining room. Today, they have evolved into multifunctional hubs – perfect for coffee, homework or even remote work areas.



Breakfast nooks aren't just pretty, they are practical. Built-in benches often double as storage, while round tables make conversation easier. A well-placed pendant light or chandelier adds warmth, especially when natural light is scarce.

In this age of fast-paced living, the breakfast nook offers a pause. It's where families gather before the day begins, where quiet moments of reflection unfold. It's not just about eating, it's about being.

### Breakfast nook designs.

- **Farmhouse charm:** Rustic wood tables, shiplap walls and cosy cushions.
- **Modern minimalism:** Streamlined, neutral tones and sleek banquettes.

- **Coastal retreat:** Light woods, airy fabrics and soft blues.
- **Scandinavian simplicity:** Functional design, natural materials and abundant light.

No matter the style, the goal is the same: to create a welcoming space that feels personal and inviting.

For a modern take on a breakfast nook incorporate the breakfast area into the kitchen by attaching it to the island. As an alternative to bar stools with a bar counter, a table top height solution offers a comfortable way too enjoy a meal at the island. Breakfast areas need to be carefully positioned to guarantee a good flow in the space. For comfortable seating





surrounding the island with tan leather chairs with walnut legs.

Incorporate nature into your home with handwoven furniture. Rattan armchairs are a great way to create a breakfast nook that is more natural. For extra cosiness, add some pillows and get ready to enjoy relaxing and comfortable seating.

Design a breakfast nook with pendant lighting to give the space ample lighting. Pendant lighting provides great lighting while adding a modern touch to any room. Some pendant lights emit diffused light, whereas others provide direct lighting. Whether a traditional crystal chandelier or a futuristic morphing globe, all these styles round out a well-designed room. The best pendant light for a breakfast

nook design idea illuminates the space, but doesn't get in the way.

Incorporate vivid colours, contrasting patterns and varied textures into a breakfast nook to create a bohemian vibe. Combine mismatched chairs or a floor seating arrangement with a low table for a creative and laid-back ambiance. For breakfast nook décor, hang a tapestry or other textile decoration in the breakfast nook for an additional bohemian touch.

Adapt the minimalist and practical Swedish approach to furniture design. Light colours make compact spaces look more prominent and broader. Go for a light wooden table and sleek chairs to create a relaxing and rejuvenating

atmosphere. Add more character to a Swedish-inspired breakfast nook by furnishing it with plants and simple décor.

Think of a breakfast nook as more than furniture; it's a lifestyle choice. A small corner that says: slow down, savour, connect. In the end, it's not the size of the space that matters, but the memories made within it. dw



## Kitchen Worktops



Soapstone



## Lighting will become part of the art and self-expression.

by Stienie Greyling

**K**itchen countertops are the centre piece of any modern kitchen. In Johannesburg, kitchen designers and homeowners can choose from affordable laminates to luxurious granite or quartz, depending on budget, durability and style preferences.

- Quartz and granite remain the most popular choices for durability and resale value.
- Laminate is still widely used in budget-conscious renovations.
- Wood countertops are gaining traction in rustic and farmhouse-style kitchens.

- DEKTON and porcelain slabs are emerging as premium options for luxury homes.

Latest kitchen countertop trends for 2026 emphasise dramatic veining, natural materials like soapstone, and durable porcelain that mimics marble. Key trends include warm neutral colours beige, taupe, matte finishes, and contrasting island colours, and integrated, matched-stone splashbacks are dominating modern, high-end designs.

### Trending kitchen countertop colours.

Countertops and other surfaces are showing off fresh colours, enhanced and dramatic new looks for 2026.

**Black** is always a timeless choice for countertops. It's sleek, sophisticated, and versatile, pairing well with various cabinet colours and design styles. A unique number of materials and finishes are available. From luxurious black marble and soapstone to more affordable choices like granite or laminate, there is no shortage of ways to add this sleek countertop colour to a kitchen.

**Blue** may not be the first colour that comes to mind when thinking of countertops, but designers agree it can be a timeless and sophisticated choice. The key, they say, is to choose natural stone slabs with hints of subtle colour. Think: blue-grey quartzite (Cielo or Fusion

quartzite, for example), slate blue quartz, and marble with subtle blue veining.

**Earthy green** colours continue to make a splash in the interior design world, and countertops are no exception. Like blue, designers say the key to incorporating green countertops in a space is to use the colour sparingly, opting for subtle incorporations. When done right, earthy green colours can act as a neutral in a space, lending subtle yet dramatic colour.

Quartzite is repeatedly mentioned by designers as the go-to in organic shades like sage, eucalyptus and olive. Though it can also function as a neutral, this chic and unexpected colour choice can make countertops a standout feature within a kitchen.

**White** countertops have had their moment, but designers agree that creamy beige and off-white countertops are where it's at if you're going for a classic timeless look. Once again, quartzite comes out as the enduring favourite among designers and homeowners. Its warm beige tones mixed with soft greys creates a neutral palette that works seamlessly with almost any cabinet colour, from rich burgundy to sage green or midnight blue.

Textured finishes are making a strong statement in engineered surfaces. Instead of relying on flat digitally printed designs, manufacturers are embossing, raising and sculpturing surfaces to replicate the look and feel of natural materials. The result is a tactile experience that mimics the feel of real stone, wood or other materials, adding depth and authenticity to countertops, walls and surfaces.

### Solid Surface.

Manmade and highly durable, solid surface countertops are crafted from a mix of minerals, acrylic, resin and colour pigments. Because of their engineered quality, the size and colour of solid surfaces are easy to customise. This material is also one of the most durable countertop choices out there.

Solid surfaces are extremely nonporous and don't require sealing or any tedious patience over time. These countertops will not stain and aren't prone to chipping or scratching either. However, harsh chemical cleaners may damage the material and dull its shine.

### Soapstone.

A popular countertop material choice for chefs and farmhouse design lovers alike, soapstone is a deep grey with blue undertones. It's a natural material with

high levels of talc, the softest mineral out there. The higher the talc content, the softer and less expensive the soapstone is. A higher talc slab is fine to use for a counter: It will show a bit more wear and tear over time due to its softness. Soapstone is also extremely heat-resistant and doesn't react to acids the ways quartz or marble does.

### Terrazzo.

Terrazzo is a material made up of small stone, glass or resin chips suspended in what is typically concrete, granite or epoxy. Terrazzo is typically used for flooring, but it's also a great countertop choice for those looking to add colour or personality to a kitchen. Terrazzo made from concrete or stone is much more durable than epoxy, which is more prone to chipping and scratching. dw





## Fabula, a narrative in constant evolution

Classical language is reinterpreted through a dynamic and contemporary lens

**F**abula is a story in constant becoming, where classical style is reinterpreted in a dynamic and never static way. A project in which the sense of balance that characterises timeless elements coexists with contemporary accents that, along a dual track, narrate the relationship between human and object.

In an age relentlessly oriented toward the future, Fabula invites us back to the present moment. Its aesthetic seamlessly merges function and emotion, where purity of line and measured proportions generate harmony and visual calm. Every design choice becomes an act of awareness, restoring value to what truly matters.

Fabula aspires to the essence of a universal design language - one that embraces diverse cultures without erasing their identities. Places, experiences, and materials remain distinct, yet connected. Cultures shape values, and values in turn shape the future.

Each environment reflects a clear "less is more" philosophy: every element has a

precise purpose, nothing is superfluous. Structural and functional components define compositions that are immediately legible and universally appreciable. The use of steel and glass creates open, luminous volumes, dissolving the boundary between interior and exterior. Materials are presented in their pure, intrinsic nature - free from ornamentation that might conceal their inherent beauty.

This is a style that welcomes cultural cross-pollination, reinterpreting the serenity of Eastern spaces with the craftsmanship, quality, and sensitivity emblematic of Made in Italy.

From the dialogue between memory and the present, between the poetry of ancient traditions and the essential clarity of contemporary design, Rastelli envisions a "kitchen designed to breathe." An environment that encourages slowing down, listening inwardly, and rediscovering the value of lived time. Fabula is born from this conviction: transforming the kitchen into a space where breath becomes spatial, beauty becomes a form of inner stillness, and



design becomes a language for daily balance.

The main composition unfolds along an operational wall in washed oak, featuring the cooking area with integrated hood, sink, and wall units with glass-fronted doors.

Adjacent, a wall of glossy taupe-lacquered tall units houses a curated selection of built-in appliances, with column ovens seamlessly integrated into the overall design.

Laid out with geometric precision to ensure ergonomics and visual order, this operational zone expresses a clear design direction - toward functionality and visual clarity - while the matte Cava Noir Desir porcelain stoneware worktop and backsplash introduce a contemporary, tactile depth.

Titanium-finished recessed handles and plinths precisely define volumes and enhance surface continuity, while the handle-less opening system reinforces linearity and purity of form.

Spatial coherence welcomes every element as part of a unified vision of visual and material harmony. The warmth of wood and the artisanal precision of craftsmanship evoke a deep-rooted savoir-faire, celebrating passion, the perfection of gesture, tradition, attention to detail, and the authenticity of making, bridging ancient knowledge with



modern creativity. In a fast-paced world, Rastelli proposes a return to proportion, awareness, and the quality of time spent in the spaces we inhabit. Fabula reminds us of the importance of slowing down, rediscovering the precision of gesture,

and restoring meaning to everyday life - anchoring us firmly in the present.

Here, minimalism is not deprivation, but fullness: a conscious, authentic way of living.

[www.rastelldesign.it](http://www.rastelldesign.it)

Sapienstone  
presents Travessa,  
the travertine that  
crosses time.

**T**ravertine stone has a long memory. It has defined the architecture of western civilisation for centuries. Its parallel veins, warm shades from ivory to hazelnut, the surface marked by thin streaks like written words: all this has entered the collective imagination as a byword of restraint, rootedness and beauty.

Travessa comes from this heritage. Its stratifications, subtly vibrant colours, that tension between compactness and depth that makes every slab unique. The result is a ceramic surface that captures its soul: the same presence, the same balance, the same ability to discreetly define a prestigious space.

But Travessa takes travertine one step further. The advanced ceramics of the Iris Ceramica Group brand Sapienstone ensure the strength, stability and durability that natural stone cannot guarantee: a material designed for contract and high-end residential projects, able to cover spaces and formats with uncompromising beauty. Large slabs, continuous surfaces, work tops, wall coverings. The collection comes in the Natural finishing, offering all the textured appeal of stone with a structured surface and in a single size - 320x160 cm, 12 mm thick - designed for high-impact continuous surfaces.


Although by nature this stone belongs to a cold, hard world, Travessa brings a sense of welcoming warmth to any room. Its ivory shades and hazelnut hues, along with the smooth texture of the veins, create an attractive presence. A surface that invites you not only to look but to linger.

This ability is also expressed through dialogue with the other materials Travessa comes into contact with, without renouncing its own character, in a sophisticated combination that gives the space a clear identity. This is the intrinsic quality of real materials: elevating every combination while remaining recognisable.



All this is part of a precise moment: the rediscovery of materials with a history, those materials that carry their own recognisable identity with them. Travertine is one of these - one of the most recognisable voices of an Italian tradition that the world considers a standard. Sapienstone reinterprets this with Iris

Ceramica Group technology, offering it a new energy without undermining any of those features that made it great.

Stone and ceramics. Memory and innovation. An ancient language, a material designed to last. 

[www.sapienstone.com](http://www.sapienstone.com)





### The Evolution of the Kitchen Worktop

In contemporary interior design, the worktop is the anchor of the kitchen. It is the surface that bridges the gap between functional food preparation and social interaction. Caesarstone understands that a worktop must be a multi-sensory experience. It is not enough for a surface to be durable; it must also possess a tactile quality and visual depth that complements the broader design palette of the home.

The brand's design philosophy is rooted in trendy, design-forward colours and global inspiration - there is a finish to suit every architectural vision. Each slab is intended to evoke the timeless beauty of the natural world while providing the reliability of a precision-engineered material.

### Pioneering Porcelain and Quartz Technology

While Caesarstone is synonymous with high-quality engineered quartz, the brand has successfully expanded its mastery into the realm of porcelain. This represents a significant leap in surface technology. Caesarstone porcelain surfaces are crafted from specialised minerals and clays, fired at extreme temperatures to create a slab that is exceptionally resistant to heat, UV rays, and scratches. This innovation allows for seamless transitions from indoor kitchens to bespoke outdoor living spaces.

A Caesarstone worktop is a reliable and durable investment designed for longevity. These surfaces are non-porous and incredibly tough, making them perfect for family homes where daily life is most active. Unlike natural stone, they require simple care and maintenance, remaining hygienic and pristine without the need for frequent sealing. This reliability is backed by an industry-leading Lifetime Limited Residential Warranty on quartz, providing homeowners with total peace of mind.

### The Ethical and Sustainable Choice

As the design industry moves toward more conscious material selection, Caesarstone continues to lead as the ethical choice. By prioritising sustainable business practices, from sourcing raw minerals to manufacturing processes that emphasise water recycling and waste reduction, the brand ensures that luxury does not come at the cost of the



## The Convergence of Art and Durability by Caesarstone

**T**he modern kitchen has evolved from a utility space into the architectural heart of the home, demanding materials that perform as impeccably as they look. For decades, Caesarstone has been at the forefront of this evolution, consistently setting the global leader standard for premium surfaces. By combining nature's raw minerals with cutting-edge technology, Caesarstone offers a portfolio that meets the rigorous demands of high-traffic kitchen environments while offering unparalleled aesthetic versatility. As the original pioneer of quartz surfaces, Caesarstone remains the definitive choice for high-end countertops in Southern Africa.




## KITCHEN WORKTOPS

environment. Choosing Caesarstone is a long-term investment that not only enhances the daily experience of the home but also increases property value, aligning premium aesthetics with a responsible footprint.

### Authenticity in Design

With global leadership comes the challenge of imitation. It is essential for designers and homeowners to be vigilant regarding counterfeit surfaces claiming to be Caesarstone. While many replicas attempt to mimic the brand's signature aesthetic, they cannot match the rigorous quality control and comprehensive warranty protection of the genuine product. There are many replicas, but only one Caesarstone.

For interior designers and architects, Caesarstone provides a reliable foundation for creativity. Its consistency in colour and thickness allows for seamless installations, whether used for expansive waterfall islands, integrated backsplashes, or minimalist commercial spaces. By choosing Caesarstone, professionals are selecting a trustworthy partner that has defined the industry for decades, ensuring that every project remains as beautiful as the day it was installed. 

*Discover the full collection and find inspiration for your next project*

[www.caesarstone.co.za](http://www.caesarstone.co.za)

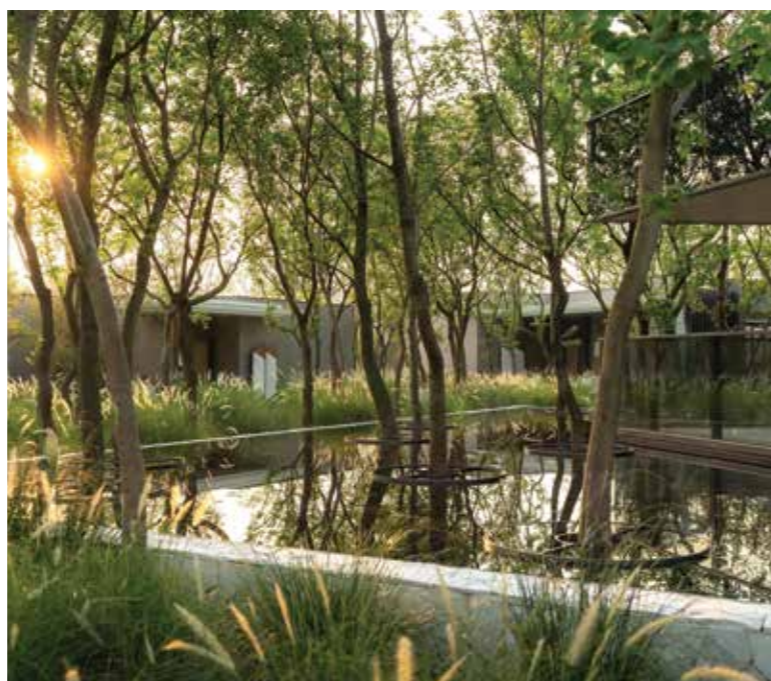


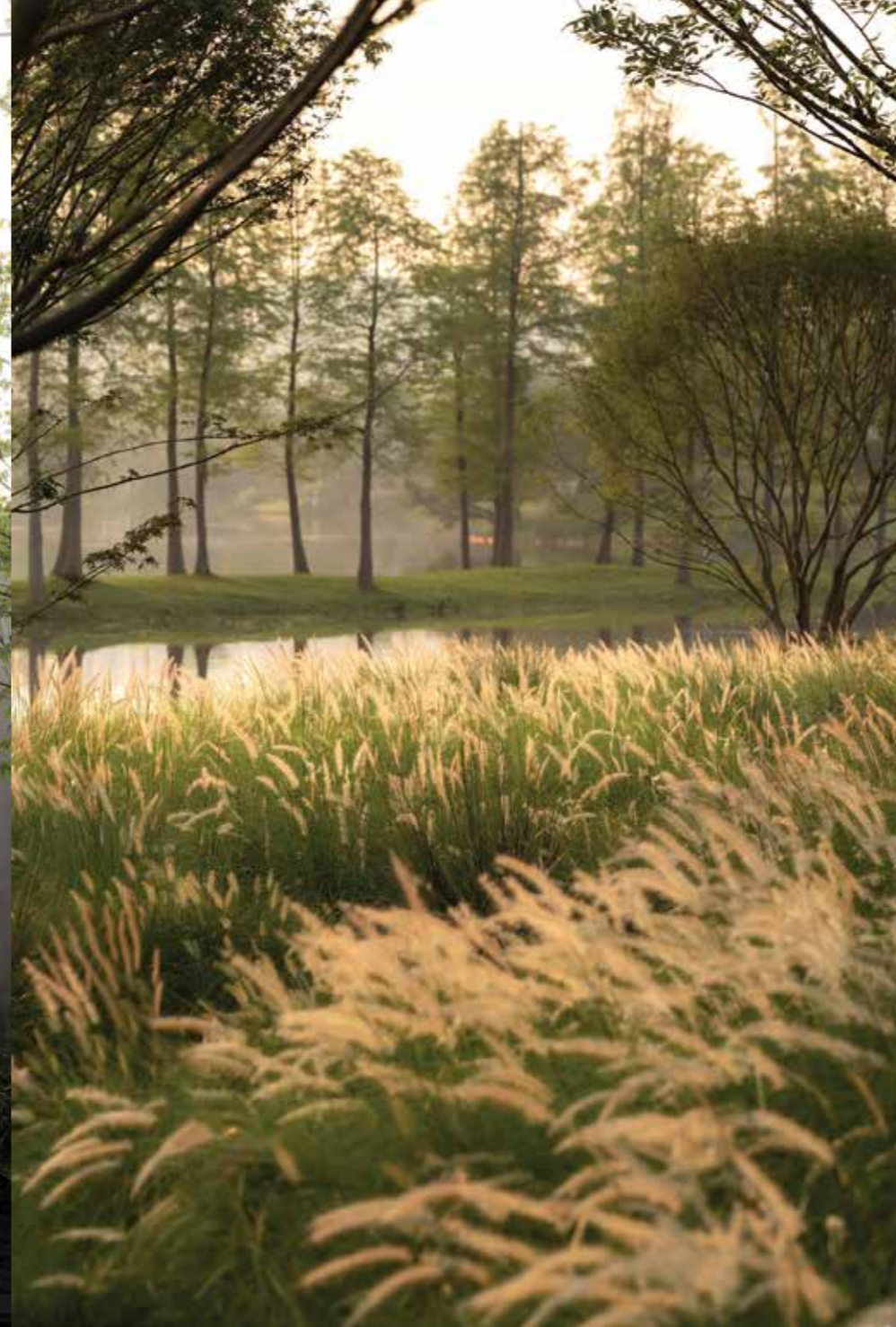
Luxelakes C7 South  
Golden Bay  
Model Island  
Chengdu, China

The South Golden Bay is located in Chengdu, southwest China. As a typical case of the central core lake area of Luxelakes, the project demonstrates the concepts and achievements of Luxelakes in ecological restoration, landscape design, and the integration of architecture and landscape. Through careful landscape planning and design, a space for coexistence between man and nature has been created.

Taking advantage of the unique advantages of the project site, with "over the wilderness" as the design theme, the design method of light landscape intervention is adopted, from the open lake to the wetlands on the shore, from the undulating grassland to the scattered buildings, and then to the viewing platform in the air. From horizontal to vertical, from open to private, a variety of different spatial feelings are formed, which increases the fun and exploration of the space.







The layout cleverly combines ecological functions with humanistic experience. The entire site presents a state of breaking out of the wilderness and growing naturally, forming a pattern of mutual penetration with nature, creating a demonstration area that is suitable for both ecological display and daily life. The architecture and landscape design complement each other, focusing on the continuity and overall beauty of the space, so that the natural elements and the artificial environment are seamlessly connected, showing the unique charm of the integration of ecology and art. dw

**Technical sheet**

- **Location:** Chengdu, Sichuan
- **Gross external sqm:** 4976m<sup>2</sup>
- **Completion date:** July 2023
- **Client name:** Chengdu Wanhua New City Development Co.
- **Client Team:** Wild Horizon Landscape Center
- **Landscape Design:** Chengdu MaiWei Landscape Architecture Studio
- **Lead design:** Gan Weiwei
- **Chief Technical Engineer:** Jin Liangliang
- **Design team members:** Ma Qing, Teng long, Huang Zhu, Liu Yuqing, Liu Lijun, Lin Ying, Fu Xuemei, Wang Chao, Li Min
- **Construction unit:** Sichuan Chorgin Landscape Co. Ltd.
- **Collaborating unit:** Hom Floraland&Horticulture Co. Ltd.
- **Photograph:** PrismImage

[www.mwla.com.cn](http://www.mwla.com.cn)





*Orbital serves as both an iconic gateway and a vibrant gathering point, offering space for anything from quiet reflection to lively celebration.  
Photo credit: Matthew Millman*



*Orbital serves as both an iconic gateway and a vibrant gathering point, offering space for anything from quiet reflection to lively celebration.  
Photo credit: Matthew Millman*

## Defining a New Urban Experience Through the Lens of Digital Craft

San Francisco Bay Area, United States

**W**hat does it mean to create public art and architecture in the 21st century? As cities become increasingly digital, the boundary between the built environment and the algorithms that shape our lives is beginning to dissolve. This shift is being defined by a new era of 'Digital Craft'—a process that utilises computational logic to move beyond mass-standardisation. By treating the computer as a master artisan's tool, architecture is no longer a static object, but a site-specific intervention that responds to its environment like a living participant in the urban realm.

At the forefront of this movement is the Bay Area-based studio FUTUREFORMS, led by Jason Kelly Johnson and Nataly Gattegno. With over 20 years of experience, the studio has become a leading voice in activating public spaces through experimentation, engagement, and play, masterfully transforming complex computation into tangible, awe-inspiring landmarks.

### Groundbreaking art: Orbital and Weatherscape

Two of the studio's recent projects serve as powerful examples of how technology intersects with public space to foster a profound connection between people and their environment.

At the entrance plaza of the OpenAI Headquarters (formerly Uber HQ) in Mission Bay, San Francisco, FUTUREFORMS has installed Orbital. Conceived as a contemporary garden folly, the structure masterfully transforms complex computation into a tangible urban icon.

Composed of thousands of digitally crafted bespoke aluminum and steel elements, the sculpture offers a dual experience: a highly reflective, perforated stainless steel exterior and an intimate, glowing interior sanctuary that the artists describe as a "Creature of the Garden".

In El Paso, Texas, the studio has completed Weatherscape, a 70' x 40' sculptural canopy for the new El Paso

## OUT AND ABOUT

Children's Museum ("La Nube"). More than a shade structure, Weatherscape is an immersive environment designed as a "living laboratory of wonder". It channels sun, wind, and water into kinetic energy and mist, making the invisible forces of the desert visible and interactive for all ages.

### Exploring the "In-Between": METAXIS at CCA

While these permanent installations define city skylines, the studio's internal creative process is currently the subject of a major solo exhibition: METAXIS: A Collection of Ideas and Objects, on view at the California College of the Arts (CCA) Campus Gallery through March 20, 2026.

The exhibition takes its name from the Greek word *metaxi*, referring to an "in-between" condition—belonging to two realms at once. METAXIS offers a rare opportunity to see the studio's evolution in its rawest form. Structured like a studio visit, the gallery features over 20 models, 3D-printed prototypes, and speculative artifacts created between 2015 and 2025.



*The exterior and interior skins of the structure are geometrically similar, but materially distinct tessellated and shingled modules. The highly reflective exterior is contrasted by a tactile and colourful interior.*  
Photo credit: Matthew Millman



*Weatherscape creates overlapping micro-climates on the terrace of the museum.*  
Photo credit: Brian Wancho



*Detail of Weatherscape's canopy, which offers both shaded comfort and visual engagement.*  
Photo credit: Genaro Limon



*Each element is a test site for natural phenomena: light bending and scattering, water rippling across surfaces, air shifting through perforations, reflections flickering in motion, refractions casting unexpected colour.*  
Photo credit: Genaro Limon



*By combining utility with aesthetic expression, shaded artworks like Weatherscape transform public spaces into inviting, social, and visually engaging environments that respond directly to the local climate.*  
Photo credit: Brian Wancho



FUTUREFORMS Founders Jason Kelly Johnson and Nataly Gattengo  
Photo credit: Matthew Millman



The sculpture evokes organic forms found in nature, as well as giant robots and futuristic space vehicles.  
Photo credit: Matthew Millman



Orbital process model, currently on view at the METAXIS exhibition.  
Photo credit: Jared Elizares



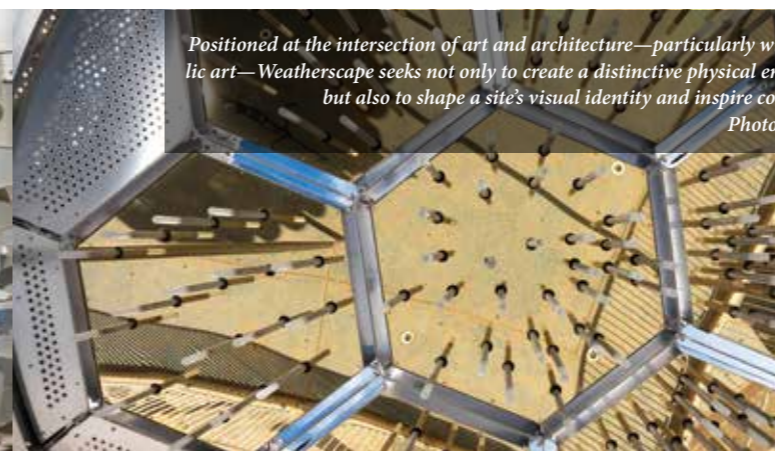
Orbital serves as both an iconic gateway and a vibrant gathering point, offering space for anything from quiet reflection to lively celebration.  
Photo credit: Matthew Millman



At its core, this project emerges from FUTUREFORMS' co-founder Jason Kelly Johnson's mastery of digital craft—where computation becomes a language and fabrication a form of authorship.  
Photo credit: Matthew Millman



Weatherscape encourages discovery through physical interaction and observation, allowing viewers to experience the invisible forces that shape our environment.  
Photo credit: Brian Wancho



Positioned at the intersection of art and architecture—particularly within the realm of public art—Weatherscape seeks not only to create a distinctive physical encounter for its visitors but also to shape a site's visual identity and inspire community engagement.  
Photo credit: Genaro Limon



More than a shade canopy, Weatherscape embodies the creative spirit of El Paso—playful, inventive, and full of energy. It becomes a place of reunion and reflection, where families and friends gather, and where movement is felt as much as seen.  
Photo credit: Genaro Limon



Orbital explores ways of bringing together these two worlds and creating an artwork that can be experienced in various ways. On the outside a textured, tessellated, high definition surface articulates a towering structure that anchors the site, providing a visual identity.  
Photo credit: Matthew Millman



In an urban Texan environment, where intense sun and high temperatures dominate, Weatherscape's canopy offers both shaded comfort and visual engagement.  
Photo credit: Genaro Limon

"METAXIS explores what happens in between: between ideas, objects, spaces, and ways of seeing," says Nataly Gattengo. "The exhibited works move fluidly between perception and imagination, inside and outside, presence and absence."

By presenting process models alongside more finished works, the exhibition illustrates how FUTUREFORMS brings together knowledge and tools from multiple disciplines—art, architecture, and computational design—to rethink how we dream and build.

**Upcoming Events on March 19th, 2026**

- Closing Lecture at 5:00pm - CCA Main Building - Nave Pres Space, 145 Hooper St., San Francisco
- Gallery Closing Reception (post-lecture) at 6:30pm - CCA Campus Gallery, 1480 17th St., San Francisco

Following its San Francisco run, the exhibition will travel to various spaces including the University of Virginia's Elmaleh Gallery in September 2026. [www.futureforms.us](https://www.futureforms.us)

[www.futureforms.us](https://www.futureforms.us)

# House 117

Toronto, Canada



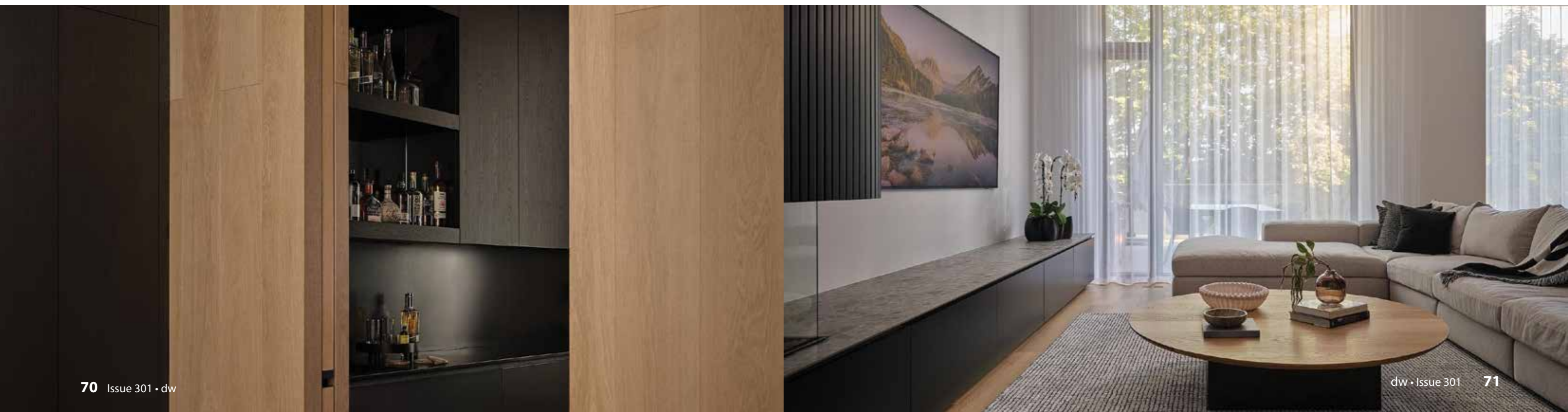
# House 117

Toronto, Canada

House 117 brings together strong material choices, thoughtful spatial organisation, and a high attention to detail across both interior and exterior design. Set within its quiet streetscape, the home is defined by its clean lines, deep-set windows, and meticulously composed brickwork. Each grey brick is twice the length of a standard unit, giving the façade a distinctive, elongated rhythm. At the base of the large brick volume, the bricks rotate to a vertical orientation, shifting the texture and subtly emphasising the elevated floor plan. The recessed windows, edged with precise metal detailing, reinforce the building's deliberate simplicity. A restrained material palette, used consistently inside and out, establishes a sense of continuity, most notably through the use of black metal plates that appear throughout the exterior detailing and reappear as the sculptural guard of the central stair.

Within, the house unfolds around this stair, a sectional spine that visually connects all levels and draws light downward through a series of carefully considered openings. Although the floor plan is elevated, the entry sits graciously at grade, reducing the procession of steps outside and creating an unexpectedly gentle arrival. Light is introduced not as an afterthought, but as a guiding principle: cuts in the building bring illumination deep into each space, subtly altering its atmosphere throughout the day and, in turn, the rhythm of life within it. A pop-out at the stair allows light to wash across the landings from the side, and in the primary bath, a skylight is woven directly into the shower, turning a daily ritual into a moment of quiet theatricality.

The collaboration between Izen Architecture and DS Interiors, who is both the homeowner and interior designer, gives the house its distinctive voice: a sculpted, materially restrained, deeply luminous home, where every junction speaks to a shared vision, carried seamlessly from exterior to interior.





The wood flooring selected throughout the home introduces a quiet warmth, lending a sense of comfort and intimacy to each space. On the main floor, the material extends beyond the horizontal plane, wrapping vertically around the central mass to create a subtle yet powerful spatial division. This gesture preserves the openness of the plan, while giving the impression of distinct, defined rooms. The wood continues seamlessly onto full-height pocket doors, allowing spaces to be enclosed when privacy is desired without interrupting the visual continuity. Precision detailing reinforces this sense of cohesion: baseboards dissolve into a minimalist reveal between drywall and floor, lighting is fully mudded-in without trims, and carefully considered fixtures, including double-head pot lights in the kitchen and a recessed multi-head track above the island, add to the home's restrained aesthetic.

The kitchen is grounded by a rich composition of black finishes: black veneer cabinetry, a black granite countertop and splashback, an integrated undermount sink, and matching black fixtures. These darker elements contrast elegantly with the natural stone island, whose dramatic veining introduces texture and visual softness. Expansive floor-to-ceiling glazing floods the space with natural light, ensuring the moody palette reads as sleek, modern, and inviting, rather than heavy. Flowing directly from the kitchen, the family room features a three-sided gas fireplace framed by curved, reeded millwork that appears to be floating above. The generous dining area comfortably accommodates eighteen guests and is anchored by a striking table crafted from two slabs of natural





stone. Above, an LED rope pendant introduces a playful, artistic counterpoint to the otherwise disciplined material language.

This refined palette continues throughout the home. The powder room amplifies drama through cove lighting, smoked mirror, plastered concrete-like walls, and a floating natural stone vanity with an integrated sink. In the principal bathroom, large-format tiles wrap continuously across floors, walls, a floating bench, and a recessed niche, creating a serene, spa-like environment. A wall-hung vanity paired with a black granite countertop, black porcelain undermount sinks, and black fixtures echoes the finishes found elsewhere, while integrated LED lighting casts a warm, calming glow.

The bold yet minimal palette ties together the home's natural and nature-inspired materials. Paired with abundant natural light, these thoughtful selections create a warm, inviting atmosphere that resonates throughout every space. The home seamlessly connects the interiors to the surrounding landscape by bringing the outdoors in.

Technical sheet

Project name: House 117

Shouldice Stone: Urban Brick Smooth

Photo credit: Younes Bounhar / DoubleSpace

dw

[www.izenarch.ca](http://www.izenarch.ca)  
[www.dsinteriors.ca](http://www.dsinteriors.ca)



# House for an Art Lover

Toronto, Canada





# House for an Art Lover

Toronto, Canada

Inspired in part by the homeowner's bright, bold, colourful, and extensive art collection, Picnic Design sets out to instill key design elements throughout the Wallace Emerson area home that inspire the imagination, while maintaining practicality. In the process, a 1920s Toronto house with a rear extension in urgent need of structural rebuilding is transformed into a visually bold, unified, and functionally comfortable home.

In the early stages of planning for the project, the client's extensive collection of modern and other artworks became the north star. The aim was to create a cohesive space by connecting design 'zones' on the ground floor using unifying elements, while maintaining a sense of playfulness and levity, and referencing the intersecting lines found in modern art.

A series of contrasting transition areas, or zones, introduce intense blocks of colour – deep blue and teal tiles in the bathrooms, earthy terracotta in the kitchen – with pleasing shifts in material or texture that elevate the interior. Framed vistas create continuity between spaces in the home, and fully exploited natural lighting, including the addition of a skylight on the second-floor hallway, adds an airy spaciousness to a formerly cramped home.

The previously small entrance area is now expanded into a five-foot-deep vestibule zone that spans the width of the house, demarcated by a dark-hued tile floor. This area incorporates Picnic Design's signature nook – a large, picturesque window bench with storage. This also acts as a focal point for the living and dining areas. Wide-plank, muted white oak flooring in the living area creates a sharp dark-to-light contrast moving from the vestibule to the living space.



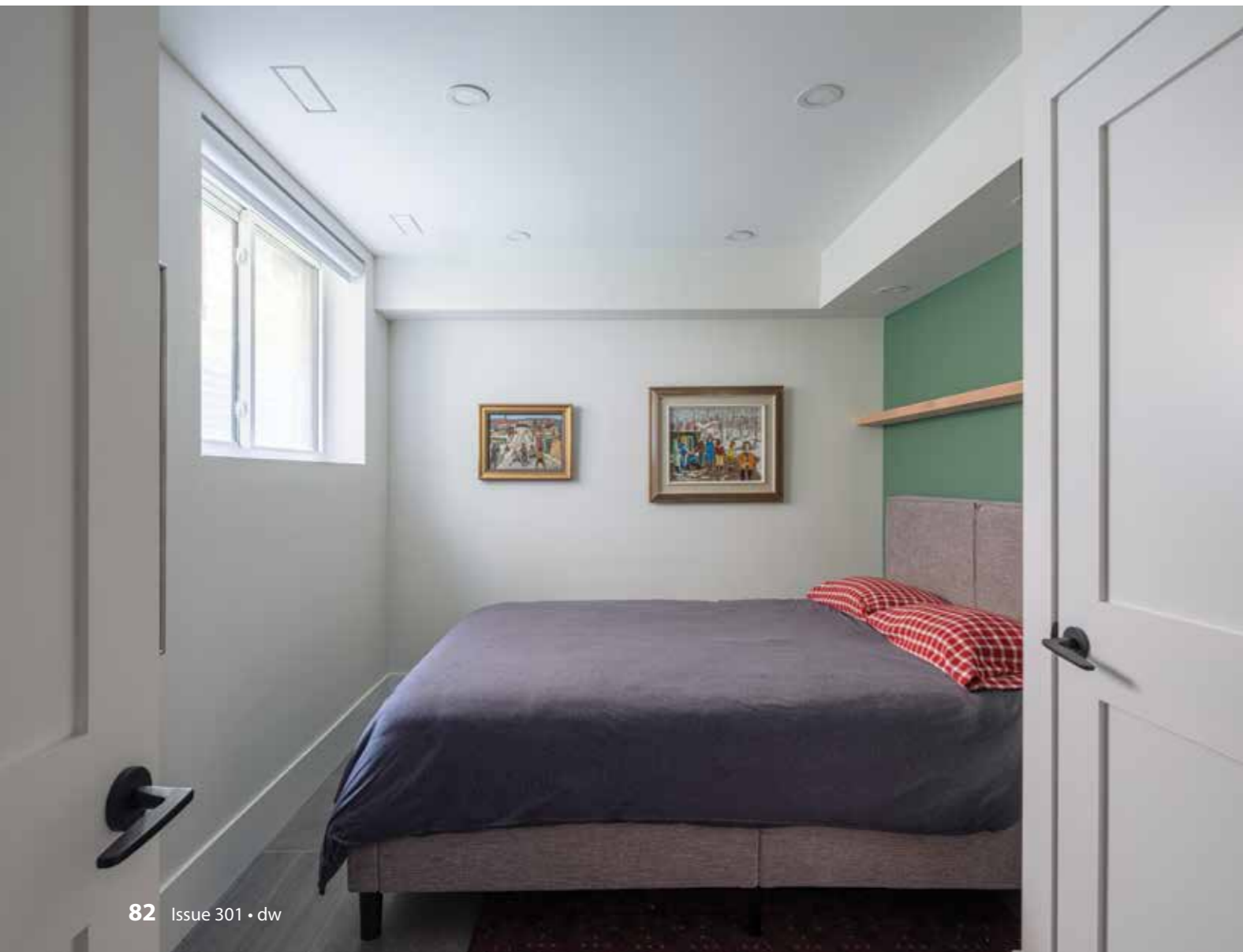
A long wall feature in thermo-fused, detailed woodgrain laminate, nicknamed the Black Strip, acts as a functional and unifying element between living area and kitchen, main house and rebuilt rear addition. Near the front of the house, the Black Strip conceals a powder room with hidden hardware and flush panelling, before segueing into seamless tall cabinets, a built-in fridge, and a wall oven in the kitchen.

The strip terminates in a white oak bench adjacent to glazed doors leading out to the back patio. A black, perforated metal, open shelving unit playfully peeks beyond the large arched frame of the kitchen entrance, mirrored by a peninsula beneath it, as viewed from the living area. This peninsula is topped by a crisp, bright porcelain slab that completes the kitchen countertop. The base of the peninsula facing the living area is wrapped in a solid white oak, half-round tambour, adding an intriguing graphical texture for a visual pause before entering the kitchen. A slim strip of window acts as a linear block of light nestled between matte grey laminate overhead cabinets and the sink.

The previously unfinished basement is now eighteen inches taller and houses a guest bedroom, bathroom, laundry closet, utility room, storage closet, and recreation room. The entire refinished basement is heated with an energy-efficient in-floor hydronic heating system.

An extra floor above the rebuilt rear addition gathers additional natural light, and a lofty master bedroom with ten-foot ceilings features a Zen-inspired ensuite bath. The bedroom's west-facing window is capped on the exterior by a brise-soleil with louvres arranged to block high-angle summer sun and reduce heat gain and glare, while in winter, low-angle sun warms the façade with passive solar heat. Norwegian fluted vertical siding in a recycled composite





of Brazilian Ipe wood wraps around the addition's exterior façade, adding a modern, castellated profile with a narrow shadow line.

A backyard once little more than a field of weeds now features an extended cedar wood deck and trellis for partially shaded outdoor entertaining. The parking area is topped by an open post and beam carport made with structurally strong and lightweight Douglas fir. A pergola roof allows evening light to enter the house, while providing partial shelter from the elements.


With the extensive renovation infused with colour and boldness, the owner gets to inhabit a home that has become a piece of functional art.

House for an Art Lover is a winner in the Architecture Master Prize Award in the Houses Interior category. dw

**Technical sheet**

- Project: House for an Art Lover
- Type: Residential
- Architecture & Interior Design: Picnic Design
- Design Team: Eric Martin, Joanne Lam
- Location: Toronto, Canada
- Size: total: 161.6m<sup>2</sup> reno: 136.6m<sup>2</sup>
- Status: Completed September 2024
- Architect: Picnic Design
- Structural: Ken Lundy
- Contractor: The English Carpenter
- Photography: Remi Carreiro

[www.picnicdesign.ca](http://www.picnicdesign.ca)

A photograph of a modern interior space. The room features a curved white staircase on the right side. In the center, there is a fireplace with a dark wood paneling behind it. To the left, there is a large window with a view of a building. A floor lamp with a white shade and a potted plant are also visible. The floor is made of light-colored wood. The overall design is clean and minimalist.

# Archi-Tectonics' London Solar House Delivers Compact Richness as a Prototype for High-Density Urban Living

London, United Kingdom

# Archi-Tectonics' London Solar House Delivers Compact Richness as a Prototype for High-Density Urban Living

London, United Kingdom

The 2,250 square-foot London Solar House is designed with the notion that 'small is beautiful', something that can be traced back to the early modernists of Europe and America who used this as a premise in their search for the most ergonomic and frugal housing unit. While their solutions leaned towards what is just enough to live comfortably, Archi-Tectonics have maximised richness and complexity to create a four-dimensional interplay of spaces linked across two eras in time and intricately crafted with shifts in movement, perspective, and materiality. The house's manifold attachments to the adjacent structures and surrounding vegetation served as the guide to the proposed volumetric extrusions that establish an otherness within the existing context.

The original structure is left intact to maintain the largely opaque building edges and serve as the foundational base for the new intervention. It is treated as the structural core, off of which a multi-faceted roof extension enveloping an additional story and other





hovering projections emerges. The intersection between the folded zinc-and-glass envelope and the densely packed programme within generates several distinctly-formed apertures such as the pyramidal skylight in the kitchen, a glass slit in the living room exposing what used to be a narrow rear yard, and a fully glazed window revealing the panoramic view of the streetscape below, framed by an old-growth tree. The terrace at the roof level extends the kitchen and dining room toward the exterior and offers a moment of outdoor respite amidst the surrounding foliage and neighbourhood roofscape. The roof is lined with fully integrated PV panels that provide the almost off-the-grid building with baseline electricity sufficient to run heat pumps, hot water supply, lighting, as well as a 13kW Tesla battery to charge an electric car.

At the heart of the building is a custom-built, winding stair that connects the entrance floor with the double-height living area above and the open kitchen-and-dining on the topmost level. The organic and fluid geometry of this solid-steel helix form connects all public areas of the house in one continuous sweep, thus creating a sculptural vortex of daylit space. Here, density and richness condense together to create a singular object that is both extremely efficient and strikingly beautiful. This stair embodies Archi-Tectonics' unique sensibility as architects to marry design intelligence, manufacturing expertise, and dynamic form-optimization to go beyond mere problem-solving.

The sculptural corporality and rich textures of the interiors are a deliberate departure from the typically rationalist and frugal effect of compact dwellings. High-contrast black raw wood cladding and cabinetry, textured stone surfaces, and brass mosaics are highlighted by soft glowing light coves. Precious glass pendants elevate the atmosphere indoors, while complementing the organically shaped wood furniture and natural wool rugs.

This project is part of Archi-Tectonics' series of broad explorations to create sustainable housing models for city-living, following 512 GW Townhouse, 497 Greenwich building, and Blaak Tower.



#### Technical sheet

- Project Name: London Solar House
- Client: Private
- Project Type: 3-story Residential renovation and extension
- Status: Completed 2024
- Location: Primrose Hill, London, UK
- Area: 2250 sf
- Design: Archi-Tectonics NYC LLC,
- Principal: Winka Dubbeldam
- Team: Justin Korhammer, Max Boerman, Wouter vander Heuvel, Mattia Gola, Santiago Herrera
- Architect of Record: Anthony Boulanger (AY Architects)
- Structural Engineer: AKTII
- MEP: WSP London
- Lighting Design: Lana Lenar
- General Contractor: Philiam
- Photography: Nick Kane

[www.archi-tectonics.com](http://www.archi-tectonics.com)





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## TAIL OF THE DOG

### Bat Appreciation

**B**ats are much maligned creatures. They are mammals, not fictions of Halloween imagination. They have been victimised by unfair negative publicity – they carry diseases, they get stuck in your hair, they are creepy. This is partly because they are nocturnal creatures, flying silently with their amazing web-shaped wings, often depicted in silhouette against the full moon.

To start with, they are tiny – the size of a small mouse, or a matchbox. Their wings are a fine soft web between their elongated fingers. If these webs are damaged by thorns or twigs, they can repair themselves. The 'hooks' on the top of their wings are their thumbs. They are covered in fur and have cute faces like minute puppies. They have varying sized ears and eyes, and different shaped snouts. Some have long tails – these are called free-tails – some have their tails included in the webbing

of their wings. They sleep hanging upside down in dark spaces.

They feed on insects and mosquitoes, eating a third of their body weight daily. Having bats outside your bedroom window is a definite plus. They navigate using a sophisticated echolocation system that alerts them to objects or prey. They are not blind – where the expression 'as blind as a bat' comes from is another unfair conception. This saying dates to the 17th century, so it is firmly entrenched in popular mythology.

They are not full of fleas or pests, they are very clean, and groom themselves regularly. They produce on average one or two pups in the breeding season (females have only two teats for milking) and carry their young hanging onto them until they are weaned. The young then stay in nurseries, tended by the older females until they are fully whelped. Birthing occurs in the summer, before the winter hibernation season.

To help the hysterical anti-batters, the families can be humanely relocated by installing a bat hotel or bat house near to their previous nesting site, which is totally sealed off when all the bats have moved into their new home.

These bat houses are slim wooden boxes, with netting up the insides, to give the bats something to grip onto when they enter from the opening underneath the boxes. Ideally, they are placed on the west sides of buildings, or on tall poles facing west, to get the warmth of the afternoon sun.

When you next see bats flying about in the evening light, please reconsider your prejudice, and be thankful that they are coping with urbanisation and actually living in your neighbourhood.

Gill Butler



[www.seatsahead.co.za](http://www.seatsahead.co.za)

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## Nova Pendant Light: A Sculptural Pendant That Redefines Contemporary Lighting

Makati City, Philippines

**R**astrullo presents the Nova Pendant Light, a masterful exercise in material alchemy that captures the essence of a celestial event. This signature fixture is a dramatic study in industrial wire mesh transformed into a fluid, organic form, embodying the sheer power and beauty of a supernova.

The Nova Pendant Light directly challenges the tradition of crystal and polish, utilising simple wire mesh to achieve an ethereal, organic fluidity. The design features layered, hand-formed mesh panels saturated in a vibrant, molten-orange hue, allowing light to filter through with a warm, textured intensity. The result is a sculptural piece that evokes a suspended nebula or a moment of stellar explosion, casting dramatic, powerful light that anchors any dining area or modern installation.

This approach to material and form was recently honoured with the LIT Lighting Design Award in the Pendant Lamp category.


*“We set out to challenge the idea of what a luxury fixture can be,”*

says Joseph Rastrullo, creator of the Nova Pendant Light and founder of Rastrullo.

*“The Nova Pendant is not about rigid perfection; it’s about capturing kinetic energy and organic movement. The recognition from the design community validates our approach of using simple, readily available materials to create something truly spectacular and celestial.”*

The Nova Pendant Light is now available for private commissions and commercial installations.

### Technical sheet

- **Product Name:** Nova Pendant Light
- **Designer:** Joseph Rastrullo
- **Award Recognition:** LIT Lighting Design Award (Pendant Lamp Category)
- **Primary Material:** Aluminum or Iron Wire Mesh
- **Material Treatment:** Painted
- **Standard Finish Color:** Molten Orange
- **Custom Finish:** Available upon request Flexibility for interior designers
- **Dimensions & Weight:** Approximate Length (L) 120 cm (Approx. 47.2 in) Longest axis due to organic form
- **Approximate Diameter:** (D) 60 cm (Approx. 23.6 in) Widest point due to organic form
- **Net Weight:** (Maximum) Less than 4 kg (8.8 lbs) Light enough for most ceilings
- **Installation & Power:** Mounting/Installation, Varies based on contractor/site preference, requires coordination with installing contractor
- **Light Source:** LED Peanut Bulbs
- **Voltage:** 120V-240V
- **Dimmable:** LED bulbs are dimmable
- **Logistics:** Lead Time: 45 - 60 Working Days
- **Certification:** Locally Certified
- **Origin:** Handcrafted in the Philippines 

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