

# designingways

ISSUE 303 SITTING COMFORTABLY HELLO WINTER INDOOR GARDENING



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# Annual JULY SALE

23 JULY 2026 - 25 JULY 2026

## Mavromac & Gatehouse 2026 Sale

There's something exciting about a great sale. It's more than just lower prices - it's the perfect opportunity to reimagine your interiors, or finally invest in the items that will bring beauty and functionality to your space for years to come, all while making your budget go further. This season's Mavromac & Gatehouse sale is designed to do exactly that: deliver exceptional value without compromising on quality.

Shoppers can expect incredible discounts across a wide range of products. Whether you're searching for gorgeous scatter cushions, stylish accessories, elegant sofas, mirrors, tables or fabrics by the metre, now is the perfect time to shop with confidence.

What makes this sale truly special is the combination of quality, variety, and affordability on pieces that are created to become part of your home's story. With great savings and exclusive promotions, there's never been a better moment to discover something new or stock up on some favourites.

Beyond the discounts, shopping during a sale is also about preparing for the months ahead. Refresh your living space with accents or update your home for the changing season. Planning ahead while prices are at their lowest is a great way to maximise your spending power.

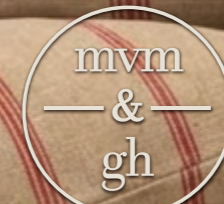
As always, our collections are produced in limited quantities and sought-after

items are expected to sell quickly, making early shopping the best strategy for securing the best selection. You will find plenty of opportunities to take advantage of these exceptional deals before they're gone.

A great sale is about getting something you've aspired to whilst spending less. Enjoy the thrill of discovering incredible bargains, and make this your most rewarding shopping trip yet.

The countdown has begun. Don't miss your chance to save, shop smarter, and bring home the quality you deserve - at prices you'll love. dw

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



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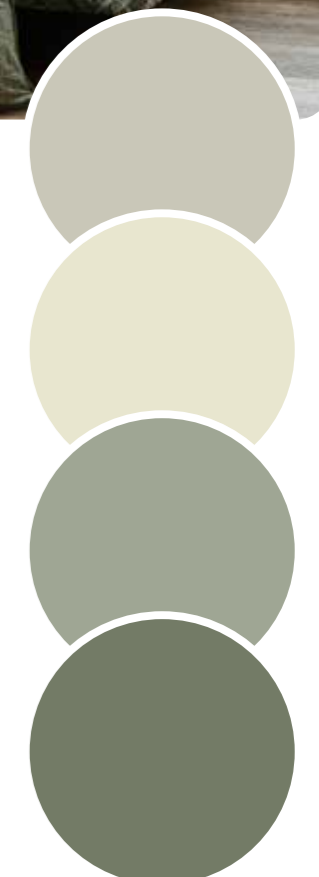


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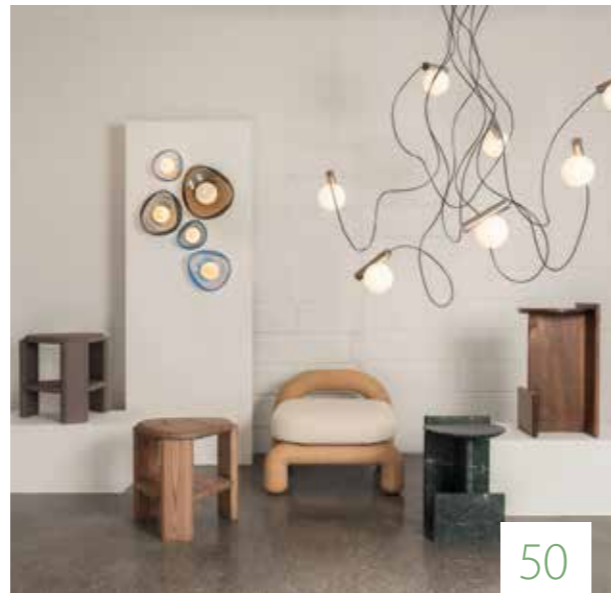
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## From Sculpture to Textile

### The Art of NewsWeaved™

**M**y journey into the world of luxury design began not with fabric, but with clay and form. Known within the Soweto creative community as Nelsie Ndimande, I earned my Diploma in Fine Art at the Funda Community College. It was there, during my second year, that I sculpted the White Seal - a piece that has remained in my studio for decades as a silent witness to my evolution. Today, that sculpture serves as more than just a memory; it is the namesake and anchor of my company, **White Seal Creations**.

From the world of sculpture, I transitioned into material innovation, seeking to bridge

the gap between fine art and functional design. This exploration led to the birth of **NewsWeaved™**, a proprietary technique that transforms discarded newspapers into a luminous, high-end textile. Through a meticulous multi-step assembly and an eco-friendly finishing process, the ephemeral nature of newsprint is rendered permanent, waterproof, and surprisingly durable. In this transformation, the everyday is elevated to the aspirational.

The artistic foundation remains central to every piece I create. Each handbag, hat, and accessory is designed as a "collectible object" that happens to be functional. My recent collection - highlighted by vibrant



yellow palettes - embodies this duality. These are not merely products; they are statements on renewal and the "Circular Economy" of luxury.

As White Seal Creations grows, the mission is scaling from art to industry. We are currently preparing **NewsWeaved™** for validation by the **Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)**, ensuring our materials meet rigorous global standards for durability and eco-safety. This intersection of art and science positions our weave as a credible alternative for broader applications in the design world.

Equally vital is the human element. Having developed a **visual-heavy technical training manual**, I am now preparing to equip a new generation of local artisans with the specialised skills required to master this craft. This initiative is structured to foster sustainable employment and preserve the heritage of hand-weaving as White Seal Creations scales. dw

Email: [whitesealcreations@gmail.com](mailto:whitesealcreations@gmail.com)  
 Instagram: [www.instagram.com/whitesealcreations.sa?igsh=ejd5dXp5M2h1Yjlv](https://www.instagram.com/whitesealcreations.sa?igsh=ejd5dXp5M2h1Yjlv)



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Are you a young South African designer ready to connect with opportunities and grow? It's time to let your light shine in the 2026 edition of the Nando's Hot Young Designer talent search



**C**areers have been launched. Dreams have been realised. Since 2016 the biannual Nando's Hot Young Designer (HYD) talent search has surfaced the hottest emerging designers in the country – talented creatives who've benefited from this coveted business-accelerator opportunity that takes talent out of the shadows and mentors it into the spotlight.

Applications are now open for the sixth edition of Nando's HYD and young designers from across South Africa are invited to show what they're made of, with entrants invited to rise to the challenge of designing a striking linear light.

At its simplest, 'linear lighting' is a source of illumination where all related fixtures are arranged in a straight row, providing directional lighting. Linear lights are often hung above a long table or counter. For Nando's HYD, the aim is to design a linear light that would shine in any Nando's restaurant anywhere in the world. Sculptural and crafted elements could introduce texture and colour, while combinations of materials create unique and interesting pieces that contribute to the overall design of the restaurant interior. Handmade details created in collaboration with crafters could be important aspects of the concept. Installation and longevity are vital, and an understanding of how the piece – which should be no longer than 1.4m and weigh under 28kg – will be transported and installed will add value.

## Italian design, reconsidered for Southern African living.

maldini

For years, luxury interiors in South Africa were built around collecting – imported brands, recognisable names – beautiful standalone objects arranged within a room.

But the conversation around design is shifting.

Today, the most compelling homes are not built around display. They are built around how people actually live. Furniture is being selected for what it allows a space to become.

This is where Maldini has quietly carved out its place.

For over two decades, Maldini has worked closely with homeowners, architects and interior designers to bring Italian furniture into Southern Africa with far greater nuance than simple importation. The business has become known not only for the calibre of its collections, but for its understanding of proportion, materiality and the realities of local hosting and living.

Over the years, Maldini has introduced some of Italy's most respected furniture houses to the South African market, selected not for trend, but for enduring design integrity, craftsmanship and the way they live within contemporary homes and working spaces.

Italian design has long held a unique position globally because it balances technical precision with warmth, sophistication with comfort, architecture with emotion, and beauty with longevity.

The result is a quieter, more enduring expression of luxury, that is built around an emotional connection to space, rather than by excess.

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

All brands are exclusive to Maldini. Book a showroom consultation with one of their Curators.



Featuring the Ronny modular sofa by Porada. Arriving soon.

**maldini.co.za**  
Made in Italy. Lived here.

+27 (0)11 444 9191  
12 Kramer Road, Kramerville, Johannesburg

porada **cattelan italia** arketipo **qeeboo** **INCANTO** ITALIAN ATTITUDE **LAGO** **PIANCA** **Chateau d'Ax**

For the 2026 edition, the Nando's HYD's business accelerator opportunity will unfold in three distinct phases: this current application phase, when aspiring designer-makers submit their entries; a shortlist phase, when finalists are chosen to develop prototypes of their designs; and a final stage, when the winning designer-maker will be selected and go on to receive a programme of tailored support which will include mentorship, market access, showcasing opportunities and community engagement with South Africa's premier designer-makers.

Nando's HYD is the centrepiece of the Nando's Design Programme and ranks among South Africa's premier biennial design initiatives. Over the years, this platform has propelled numerous local design careers, including that of Thabisa Mjo from Mash T. Design, who emerged as one of the inaugural competition

winners in 2016. Mjo has described the opportunity as nothing short of life-altering, citing it as the catalyst that 'changed the trajectory of my entire life.'

Nando's HYD is managed on behalf of Nando's by Clout/SA. 'Clout/SA celebrates the vision and vitality of South African design. We're a business-to-business market maker. A bridge that connects South African designers and makers with local and global commercial opportunities.

At Clout/SA, we celebrate the creative pulse of South African design by sharing our curated collections of furniture, lighting, and décor with clients and collaborators around the world,' says Creative Director of Clout/SA, Tracy Lynch.

Entries close on 16 June 2026. For more information and to submit entries online, please visit the official microsite.

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



## The Curtain Just Got Smarter

by Coulisse

**C**oulisse introduces a complete smart curtain concept that brings Motionblinds intelligence to one of the most enduring window covering categories.

Curtains have always been about more than function - they define the atmosphere of a room, frame a view, and complete an interior. With the Coulisse smart curtain concept, that same emotional quality now comes with the convenience of a fully connected smart home solution.

### A complete concept, engineered from the ground up

The system pairs a newly developed curtain track with Motionblinds smart motors to deliver a seamless, fully integrated solution. The track is designed specifically for motorisation - not adapted from a manual system - which shows in every detail. An asymmetric end cap design allows the master carrier to travel the full length of the track, so curtains hang naturally from edge to edge with no exposed hardware visible from the front. Available in black or white, and compatible with both pleat and wave curtains, the track works for straight and curved configurations across residential and commercial projects.

A built-in groove along the top rail keeps brackets and the split connector hidden from view - because in a premium interior, the hardware should never be the story.

### Smart control, multiple motors

Operation is handled by Motionblinds smart motors, supporting control via app, remote, voice commands, or manual

control. The range covers both battery and wired options - including motors with Matter and Thread support for full smart home integration - giving dealers the flexibility to specify the right solution for any project, from a single residential room to a high-use commercial environment.

A virtual end limit feature allows precise programming via the Motionblinds app, while manual pull override ensures the system always responds to the human in the room.

### The cross-sell opportunity

For fabricators and dealers already working with Coulisse roller blinds, honeycomb, or other window covering categories, the smart curtain concept is a natural extension. Curtains are frequently combined with other window covering styles in the same interior - making this a genuine upsell opportunity with no major investment in new tooling or technical know-how required.

Easy to assemble, ship, install, and specify - the smart curtain concept is built to work within the businesses that sell it, not just the homes it ends up in.

### About coulisse

Coulisse is a global window covering specialist headquartered in the Netherlands, with offices in Miami, Shanghai, and Sydney. For over 30 years, the company has developed smart, design-led solutions for fabricators, wholesalers, retailers, and commercial solution providers worldwide. The Motionblinds sub-brand covers the full range of smart motor technology, applicable across all window covering types.

For more information, the Coulisse website or contact your regional Coulisse representative.

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



## THE PINNACLE KIGALI

with interiors by Redesign Interior Design  
Studio & Gemtree Interiors

With humble beginnings in a family style retreat, The Pinnacle Kigali quickly outgrew its foundational brief, forging a path of its own. As the architecture evolved and its potential became increasingly apparent, the clients extended the scope to transform the property into a one-of-a-kind, high-end boutique hotel. A potential space for more than the founding family alone, opening up to the opportunities of immersive, customised stays.

This new direction called for interiors that would not only welcome guests, but immerse them in a world of curated African excellence - an environment that redefines luxury through storytelling, intentionality, and soul. Over a committed five year period, a dedicated team of visionaries and creatives came together to craft and curate this experiential space, guided throughout by the vision to

showcase African excellence to the finest degree.

The Pinnacle Kigali was never to be a conventional hotel. From the outset, the brief demanded a layered, sensory experience that speaks to contemporary travellers who seek more than just beauty - they seek meaning, connection, and transformation. Each element of the space was to be completely custom designed, ensuring that nothing feels generic and everything feels considered.

The 9-bedroom estate has taken its time to evolve into an extraordinary boutique style hotel, blending the comprehensive amenities of a large chain brand with the personalised touch of a private home. Every aspect of The Pinnacle Kigali has been meticulously designed to offer an unparalleled experience, catering specifically to the discerning tastes of the visiting, high-end clientele. Representing the apex of luxury and exclusivity within

contemporary hospitality, this space sets out to transcend any preconceived ideas of bespoke getaways, surprising you at every turn with something more to marvel at.

The unique property stands as a beacon of opulence, sophistication, and African excellence, set within the rolling hills of Kigali. The hotel's physical elevation, high above the city, brings you to new heights. Boasting uninterrupted, panoramic views of the metropolis below, you can't help but feel on top of the world. The carefully considered biomimic design ensures that you are forever suspended in a state of absolute bliss and deep relaxation - enveloped and enfolded by true sublimity.

At The Pinnacle Kigali, design and narrative are inseparable. Every corner of the estate carries meaning that is deeply personal, symbolically rich, and consciously expressed through space. Redesign and Gemtree approached the

project not as a traditional brief, but as a living story to be gently translated into form, texture, colour, and light.

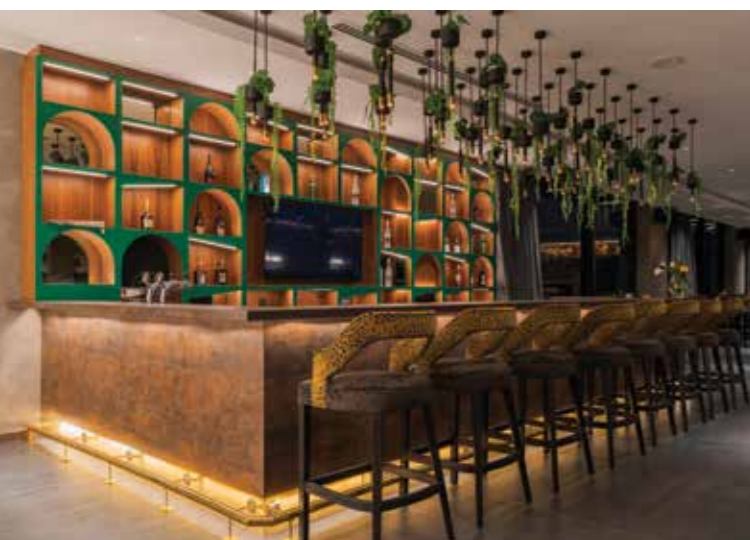
The spatial layout and interior atmosphere is underpinned by a strong conceptual narrative.

Despite the vast square meterage, every space needed to feel thoughtful and unique, reflecting the personal journey of the family who first called it home. To achieve this, every space throughout the hotel was dedicated to someone, or somewhere, and holds a name in Kinyarwanda (the local language.) The bedrooms, in particular, serve as intimate tributes - each room named and designed after loved ones and life-shaping locations that hold profound emotional resonance. On the upper floor, the three suites are named for the client's children, whilst the ground floor suites are named after a place that has marked a significant chapter in the clients' lives.

Along with this thematic golden thread, the interiors also followed a chromatic progression using the three floors as natural dividers - journeying from grounded richness to refined lightness. On the lowest level, the entertainment and hospitality general spaces embrace a deep, moody palette - dark woods, saturated tones, textured finishes. The middle floor, home to the guest suites, softens into a more muted, transitional grey. And as you rise to the topmost level, the palette lightens into white, signifying not just elevation in height, but also a lifting of the spirit.

- **Client:** Private Client (Undisclosed)
- **Location:** Kigali, Rwanda, Africa
- **Project Type:** Boutique Hotel
- **Size:** 8 000 m<sup>2</sup>
- **Timeline:** 5-Year Development

[www.redesign-interiors.co.za](http://www.redesign-interiors.co.za)  
[www.iidprofessions.org.za](http://www.iidprofessions.org.za)



## KSA update, June 2026.

**N**etworking, education, and inspiration were the order of the day at the KSA Gauteng Industry Showcase held at the end of May. This annual event has become known as an opportunity for built-environment players to get out of the office and enjoy some time together.

On Wednesday, 27 May 2026, the Kitchen Specialists Association hosted a spectacular industry showcase in partnership with the IID. Industry professionals, suppliers, and kitchen industry partners gathered at The Acreage Venue & Restaurant in Randjesfontein for a day filled with learning, innovation, and community. In a relaxed outdoor setting that felt worlds away from the standard corporate boardroom, attendees enjoyed beautiful weather, vibrant conversations, and a welcoming atmosphere.

The event also showcased three curated CPD talks as well as specialist training. Talks on the day started with 'The art of beautiful cabinetry both inside and out.' This panel discussion looked at how cabinetry has evolved over the years due to technological advancements and changes in attitude when it comes to design. It looked at how cabinetry has had to change from purely practical to elegant



yet functional furniture installations and assessed how best to achieve this.

The second talk was titled 'De-othering' and looked at how the design thinking process needs to adapt to accommodate an approach that caters for hidden disabilities. This talk focused primarily on the need for key spaces, like the kitchen, to accommodate the needs of the neurodiverse. We were very pleased

to have Kate Wardle, MD of Include Me as part of the panel.

The final talk of the day was entitled 'The Specifications chain - who is responsible for what.' Here the KSA reflected on cases that they have had to mediate on where disputes have arisen between industry professionals and their cabinetry specialists due to a lack of understanding of material applications

**YOU'RE INVITED!**

# KSA KZN SHOWCASE

CPD & Networking Event in Collaboration With The IID

**Wednesday 08 JULY 2026**  
Open 10AM until 4PM

**Venue - Blum Durban, Unit 6; 23 Riverhorse Rd, Riverhorse Valley, Durban**

**RSVP**  
via the link provided or to [kzn@ksa.co.za](mailto:kzn@ksa.co.za) before 6 July.




## TALKS, TRAINING AND PRODUCT EDUCATION

Whether you are a kitchen designer, architect, interior designer, builder or developer our day is full of valuable conversations you don't want to miss. Also valuable engagements with our hosts on the day who will be showcasing their product offerings and value-adds.

**10h45 - The Specifications Chain - responsibilities, conflict avoidance and successful partnerships.**

**13h00 - Good, better, best - a how to for the cabinetry space**

**15h00 - The Art of Beautiful Cabinetry both inside and out**

**1.0 CPD points - Category I for professionals that attend the full day, all 3 talks, and submit a completed CPD passport, or 0.1 points per talk attended. The IID is a VA of SACAP**

Guests joining us for the full day, and all three talks, will receive refreshments sponsored by our hosts. Other guests are welcome to take advantage of our food truck to purchase themselves a bite to eat and drink.




and tolerances, poor communication and assumptions as to each other's roles and responsibilities. The panel unpacked how things can be better approached to ensure successful projects and better teamwork.

Alongside the talks a sales skills workshop, aimed at creatives like designers, was held by Craig Lourens of Action Coach.


Food trucks served up delicious meals, keeping everyone energised as they moved between the KSA Supplier member stands, CPD Talk presentations and sales training sessions. It was the perfect environment to reconnect with old colleagues and forge new industry connections.

Exhibitors for the day included Hafele, Kwikot, Grass, Vogue, Upper Edge, Greenlam, Sonae Arauco, Mactool, Union Tiles, Rubio Monocoat, Raiel, DoorsRUs, Home Concept, Roco, Unipanel, Max on Top, Specialty Coatings, PG Bison, Artiscad, Salvocorp, Blum and National Edging. This year, kitchen manufacturing members Totem and Denic Cabinets also joined in, along with Action Coach to add even more value to an already packed exhibit.

Our thanks go out to all who helped in making the day such a success, including our service providers; and in particular the IID team.

We now turn our heads to the first ever KSA showcase event in Durban. Durban is crying out for more opportunities for built-environment players to network, connect and learn. We have heard that cry and will be hosting our first ever KZN showcase, with the IID's support, on 8 July. The event will be held at Blum - Unit 6; 23 Riverhorse Rd, Riverhorse Valley, Durban and will be open from 10am till 4pm. Once again we will have three curated CPD talks that are suitable for everyone in the built environment. We will also have a host of suppliers who will be showcasing new products and offerings as well as a food truck for refreshments. Please watch our social media and website for

more information or to RSVP. Industry professionals who join us for the full day will be able to gain 1.0 CPD points. We encourage architects, kitchen designers and manufacturers, interior designers, builders and developers to join us. We would love to make this an annual event but can only do so if it gets the support of industry. For more information, please contact Patsy on [kzn@ksa.co.za](mailto:kzn@ksa.co.za).

Look out for our industry networking event taking place in George in August and our Cape Town industry showcase in October - contact Ebbe on [westerncape@ksa.co.za](mailto:westerncape@ksa.co.za) for more information. 

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



## Dragon Crèche

Beijing, China

Beijing-based design studio, Studio Vapore, has collaborated with the International School of Beijing (ISB) to create the Dragon Crèche, a compact nursery designed for infants and toddlers of the school's staff.

The project transforms a previously unused balcony into a calm and functional environment that supports teacher mothers returning to work. During the day, the space accommodates feeding, resting, and short visits, allowing mothers to reconnect with their children in between classes.

### A single room structured for quiet

The layout is organised as a sequence of small, connected zones within a single room, arranged from more public to more private.



An entrance area acts as a filter, providing space for stroller parking and cubbies. This leads into a small pantry before opening into the main play area. Along the edges of this central space, more private zones for nursing, feeding, and sleeping are arranged, allowing different activities to coexist while maintaining a sense of calm.

Rather than relying on rigid partitions, arches and curtains define the spaces, maintaining visual continuity while allowing flexibility and privacy when needed.

A slightly elevated platform runs along the main play area. It functions both as a secondary play space and as a resting zone, where mattresses can be arranged for toddlers. Elements integrated into the walls support early movement and development, allowing children to pull themselves up and interact with the space in a safe and intuitive way.

### An illustrated interior

The design is built around the idea of a forest inhabited by the school's dragon - a





## SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

calm and friendly presence rather than a dominant character.

A large felt wall defines the main play area, depicting a forest in a daytime setting with soft light, vegetation, and subtle movement suggested through falling leaves and layered textures. The illustration creates an immersive backdrop while remaining gentle and open to interpretation.

The wall also functions as a sensory surface, where variations in depth and material invite touch and interaction.

In contrast, the elevated area shifts into a night setting, where tones deepen and the atmosphere becomes quieter and more subdued. This transition supports the dual use of the space, moving naturally from play to rest.

### Light and material

The room faces west and receives limited natural light. A central skylight introduces soft, diffused illumination, recalling the filtered light of a forest canopy.



Floorplan  
Photo credit: studio vapore



This is complemented by a series of suspended paper lanterns in the main space, adding a warm, atmospheric quality.

Materials are intentionally soft and tactile. Padded flooring, large mattresses, and felt surfaces contribute to comfort, safety, and acoustic control. The combination of felt, fabric, mirrored surfaces, and artificial leather creates a layered sensory environment, supporting exploration and early development.

### Making use of what exists

Working within a very limited footprint, the project demonstrates how overlooked spaces can be transformed into meaningful environments.

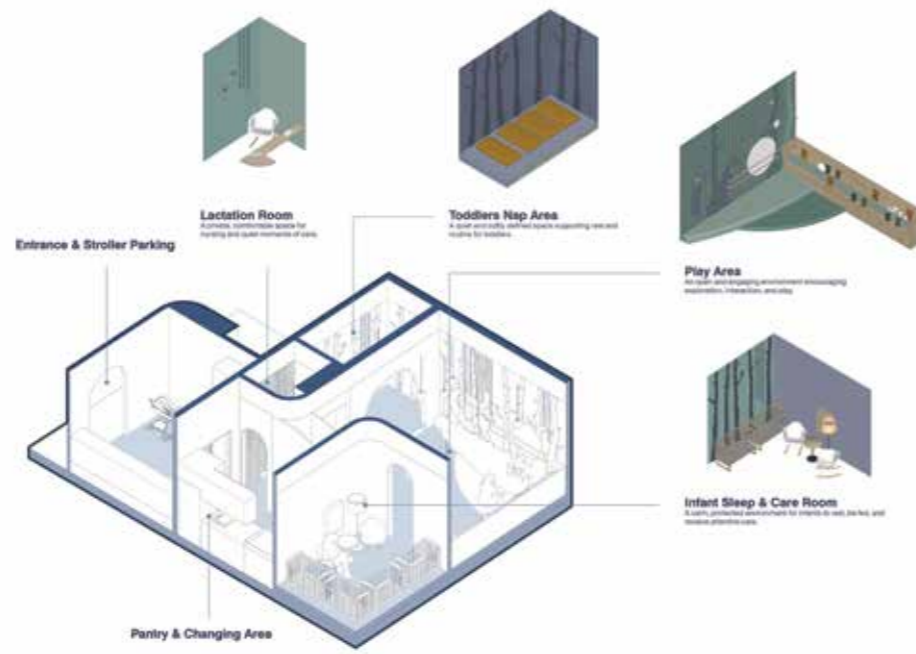
The crèche is part of a broader approach to reclaim underused areas within the school, turning residual spaces into places that support everyday life. Through careful organisation, light intervention, and a strong spatial identity, the Dragon Crèche supports both the practical and emotional needs of its users. dw



Technical sheet

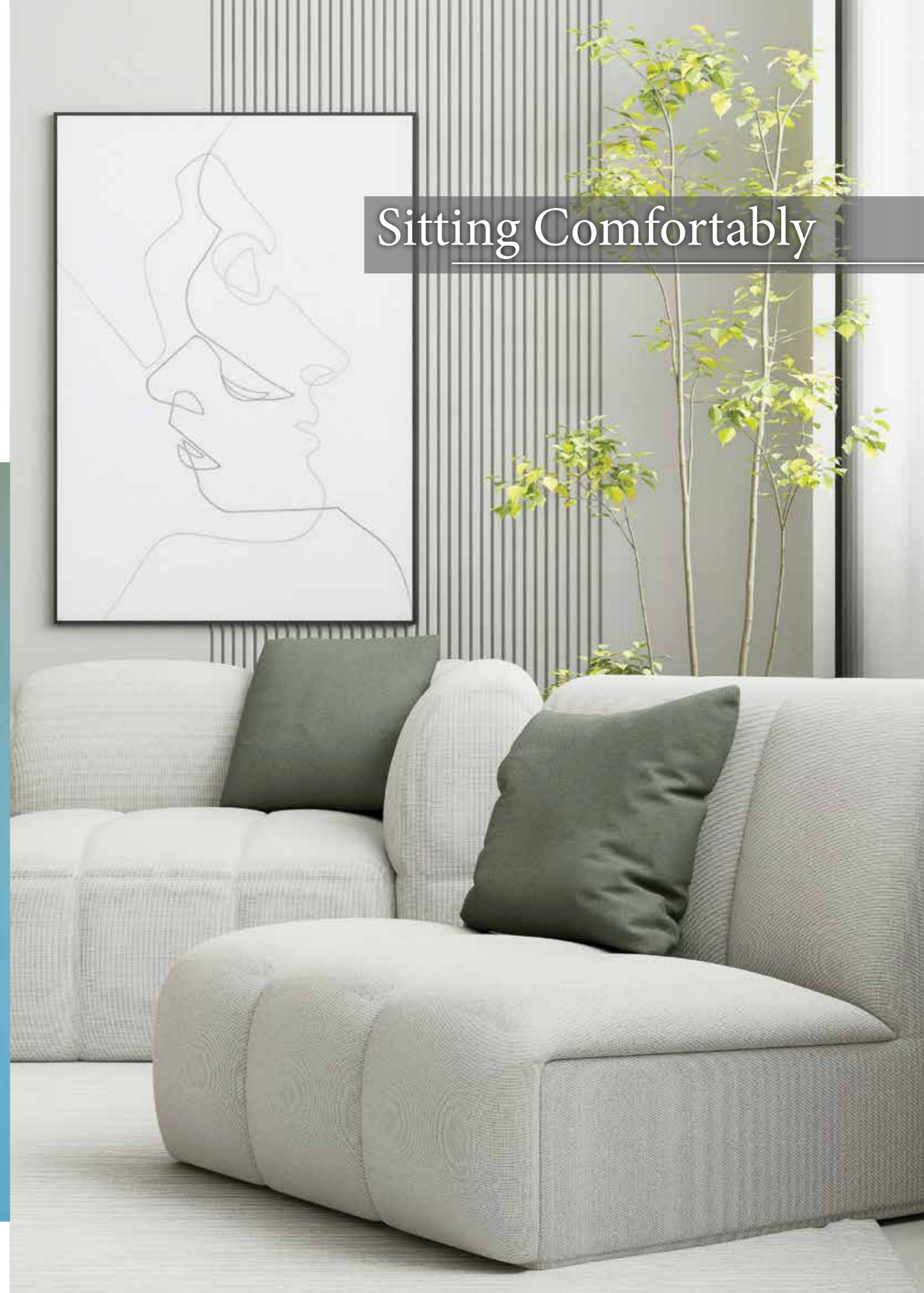
- **Project Name:** Dragon Crèche at the International School of Beijing
- **Client:** International School of Beijing (ISB)
- **Location:** Beijing, China
- **Completion:** March 2026
- **Scope:** Architecture & Interior Renovation
- **Program:** Nursery / Early Childhood
- **Designer:** Studio Vapore
- **Lighting Design:** studio vapore & Beijing MoStar Technology
- **Construction:** ABO Construction
- **Photo credit:** Vincent Wu

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



Axonometric View  
Photo credit: studio vapore

# Sitting Comfortably



## Sitting Comfortable

by Stienie Greyling

**S**ofa trends for 2026 prioritise deep comfort, organic curves and textile textures, moving toward, oversized, cosy designs that feel lived-in and luxurious.

The latest releases on the market embody an increasingly conscious idea of hospitality and experimentation, synthesising form, material, light and palette to redesign the identity of the contemporary living room in an original way.

Aside from the style and colour of a sofa, choosing a design with longevity is key for today's modern home. The big sofa trends for 2026 take all of these factors into account to help you choose the right comfy companion for your home and update your living room in the spring.

Patterned sofas are trending as the demand for more characterful and colourful interiors continues to rise. However, buying a sofa is a big investment, so it's important to consider this purchase carefully and not blindly follow trends.

Maybe loud, bold patterns aren't for you. If you're into a more minimaluxe feel, then the relaxing, low-slung trend will be



right up your street.

Drawing inspiration from the vibes of the 1970s, this trend is all about creating an atmosphere of ease, informality and ultimate comfort. Beds, sofas, coffee tables, and side boards are moving closer to being grounded, inviting homeowners to embrace a new level of lounging. Like many 70s-inspired décor ideas, this trend challenges the usual look of formal, high-back chairs and other furniture.

If you're looking to add personality to your home and aren't scared of making a statement, bold furniture can be just the thing you need.

In 2026, we are seeing even greater demand for colours associated with the natural world. Blue and green colours are perennially popular, but demand has risen

even further this year. Blue and green – whether bold or muted, are in increased demand thanks to the grounding effect they have on a space.

A bold sofa in a cobalt shade can conjure happy memories of seaside holidays, whilst a muted green sofa evokes the calmness of nature. Both are versatile shades and work with several styles and colourways. Choosing these colours allows you to create interiors that feel both timeless and refreshing, bringing a sense of balance and serenity to a living room.

Breaking with conventional living room design rules, there is a trend toward sofas taking over the floor space.

The trend for extra-large sofas is set to continue into 2026. This is driven by

our spending more time on our sofas – more of us lounge on our sofas to watch television or use our sofas when working from home.

There is increased interest in large or extra-large sofas that provide enough seating for the whole family, with extra room for guests. These sofas are not just practical and comfortable, they also make a style statement because the bigger the sofas, the more it dominates a room.

Curved furniture is one of the best design tips to create a relaxing JAPANDI living room scheme. If your priority is peace and rest, the JAPANDI aesthetic is a great way to achieve that.

Curved sofas are predicted to be popular as we continue to prioritise comfort and increasingly desire as much seating as possible. A sofa with a curved shape is an antidote to stark minimalism, but still feels very contemporary.

Opting for more organic shapes with your furniture will elevate the space, making it feel more relaxing, welcoming and peaceful. As for more organic shapes with your furniture, it will elevate your space, making it feel more relaxing, welcoming and peaceful.

As modern homes evolve into multipurpose spaces, we are seeking more flexibility from our sofas, in terms of style, size and configuration.

For those who like a little more freedom, the modular shape shifter is the sofa for you. When space is limited, one might have to opt for pieces of furniture that serve multiple functions. From unique storage ideas to always being prepared with a guest bed for friends, the sofa can offer more than just a seat.

Modular designs that can expand, adapt or reconfigure are a major growth area, especially in urban homes and multifunctional space. This is just confirmation that it is leaning away from the bold colours of the recent maximalist styles, and favouring versatile neutrals and minimal prints, with a focus on durable performance fabrics that can stand the test of time alongside daily wear and tear. Modular seating is the solution for making a small living room feel bigger.

Cloud sofas are set to dominate sofa trends yet again this year. After originally going viral on TikTok in 2023, the trend has developed to reveal how consumers love a neutral sofa that quite literally feels like floating on a cloud.

This means sofas with wide seats that go far enough back to allow criss-cross sitting positions and enough room for couples and pets to get cosy together, are clear winners in 2026. A neutral deep sofa that provides comfort and practicality never goes out of style. dw





## Anna Maya and the contemporary Brazil of Ginga

The Brazilian architect and designer translates the rhythm of capoeira into a new design harmony



On the occasion of Salone del Mobile. Milano, Brazilian architect and designer Anna Maya, one of the most authoritative voices in her country's contemporary creative landscape, presented *Ginga*, a modular sofa that transforms into design one of the most emblematic gestures of Brazilian culture: *ginga*, the fluid and oscillating movement that forms the foundation of capoeira.

Born from the encounter of African, Indigenous, and European traditions, *ginga* is not merely a technique but a form of bodily intelligence: a continuous rhythm built on adaptation, improvisation, and relationship with space. It is from this dynamic principle that the project takes shape.

Presented at Salone del Mobile.Milano within the Brazilian Furniture space, promoted by Abimóvel and ApexBrasil, *Ginga* interprets design as a territory

of encounter between cultural identity, formal research, and a contemporary vision of living.

### Rhythm as structure

In the language of capoeira, *ginga* is the movement that never stops: a sequence of oscillations that keeps the body balanced between stability and transformation.

This same principle becomes the conceptual matrix of the project. *Ginga* is conceived as a modular system capable of generating ever-changing configurations: each element can be combined, rotated, or recomposed, giving rise to compositions that evolve over time and space.

Like the gesture from which it takes its name, the structure of the project does not impose itself with rigidity but suggests possibilities. Domestic space thus becomes a field of dynamic relationships, where furniture contributes to **creating a moving harmony between body, space, and function.**

### Between geometry and gesture

The formal construction of the sofa reflects this balance between rigour and spontaneity. The seating develops from a linear base organised by horizontal seams

that articulate the volumes and introduce a precise visual rhythm. These lines become both a graphic sign and a compositional device, allowing different fabrics, colours, and textures to be combined.

In contrast with the linearity of the base, the spherical backrest emerges as the focal element of the project. Its gathered surface generates a perception of softness and movement, introducing a sensory dimension that distances the object from any formal rigidity.

On the back, a vertical seam guides the eye toward an unexpected wooden sphere, almost like a full stop concluding the composition.

### Form as identity

The presence of the sphere is not a casual element but a constant in Anna Maya's design research. In her work, pure geometries become tools through which to explore the relationship between balance, movement, and perception.

This attention to essential volumes – particularly the sphere – finds a natural affinity with the tradition of Brazilian modernism, in which architecture has often transformed geometry into a plastic and dynamic gesture.

SITTING  
COMFORTABLY



In Ginga, this element assumes both structural and symbolic value: on one hand defining the project's visual identity, and on the other evoking the idea of continuity and transformation that permeates Brazil's culture of movement.

Through the dialogue between precise lines and organic surfaces, the sofa constructs a language in which structure and freedom coexist. The project defines an aesthetic while simultaneously suggesting a fluid and open way of inhabiting space, one that is constantly evolving.

Within this perspective, sustainability also becomes an integral part of the design logic. The use of certified woods, renewable upholstery, and production processes aimed at reducing textile waste is combined with a design conceived for durability and the reconfigurability of components, helping to extend the product's life cycle.

With Ginga, Anna Maya continues a design research distinguished by an authorial and conceptual approach, rooted in Brazilian culture yet far from its most stereotypical representations. Her work contributes to expanding the perception of contemporary Brazilian design, revealing a more experimental, independent, and deeply identity-driven dimension. dw



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Hello Winter

## The Art of Mercis Upholstery

by Stuart Graham

**M**ercis upholstery has carved out a distinctive place in the interior design and furniture industry, particularly among those who value quality, texture, and refined aesthetics. Known for its rich textile offerings and thoughtful material selection, Mercis brings together modern design sensibilities with a tactile, almost artisanal quality that appeals to both designers and homeowners.

At the heart of Mercis upholstery is a strong emphasis on fabric innovation. The brand is recognised for its curated collections that feature textured weaves, soft velvets, and durable blends designed to withstand daily use without sacrificing beauty. These fabrics are carefully developed to balance visual appeal with practical function, making them suitable for both residential and commercial settings. Whether used in a statement armchair or a full lounge suite, Mercis materials add depth and dimension to furniture pieces.

One of the defining characteristics of Mercis upholstery is its colour palette. Rather than relying on overly bold or fleeting trends, the range tends to focus on earthy neutrals, muted tones, and sophisticated hues that complement a wide variety of interiors. Shades like charcoal, sand, olive, and deep blue often

feature prominently, allowing designers to create calm, cohesive spaces. At the same time, select accent colours and textured finishes offer opportunities for subtle contrast and visual interest.

Durability is another key feature that sets Mercis upholstery apart. The fabrics are engineered to resist wear, fading, and pilling, ensuring longevity even in high-traffic environments. This makes Mercis a popular choice for hospitality projects, office spaces, and family homes where furniture is expected to perform over time. Many of their textiles are also developed with sustainability in mind, reflecting a growing industry shift toward responsible sourcing and production.

In addition to performance, Mercis places strong value on comfort. Upholstered furniture using Mercis fabrics tends to feel inviting and soft to the touch, enhancing the overall user experience. The tactile quality of the materials plays a major role in how a

space is perceived, contributing to a sense of warmth and understated luxury. Designers often use these fabrics not just for seating, but also for headboards, cushions, and wall panels, extending their impact throughout a room.

Mercis upholstery also aligns well with contemporary design trends that favour layered textures and organic materials. It pairs effortlessly with wood, metal, and stone finishes, making it versatile across different styles from minimalist to more eclectic interiors. This adaptability ensures that Mercis remains relevant in a constantly evolving design landscape.

Ultimately, Mercis upholstery represents a thoughtful combination of style, function, and quality. Its fabrics are designed not only to look good, but to feel good and last, making them a dependable choice for anyone seeking to elevate their interior spaces with subtle sophistication.

dw

[www.stuartgraham.co.za/en](http://www.stuartgraham.co.za/en)

 **MERCIS**  
by stuart graham



## Winter outdoor living

by Stienie Greyling

Winter outdoor living is all about creating warmth, comfort and ambiance so that the family and friends can enjoy the patio and garden, or balcony even in cold weather. The key elements are outdoor heating, layered textures, cosy lighting and weather-resistant furniture.

Latest winter outdoor living trends focus on transforming garden spaces into year-round, cosy and multifunctional 'micro-resorts'. As of late 2025 and looking into 2026, the emphasis is on blending indoor comforts with the natural environment, using weather-resistant materials and creating warm, inviting social zones.

Colour is no longer reserved for cushions or potted blooms. Patio trends 2026 are splashing it over walls and everywhere else. We are going to see patio ideas that trade softness for saturation, with oxblood painted alcoves or deep olive plaster edging the layout. Moreover, it seems like designers have moved



beyond beige entirely. Clay and sage are covered now, along with the layered pigment blocks that read like cut earth. High-gloss lacquers, once exclusive to cabinetry, are sealing all kinds of surfaces, catching daylight in broad sweeps.

#### Forms curve because movement does.

Circular platforms pull seating into the centre and planter bands bend gently toward traffic walking past. Even when

outdoor furniture sits on strict grids, the layouts no longer insist on straight lines. Patio trends 2026 prefer arches to overhead beams, complemented by benches that round toward the view. We may not even notice the curves at first, only the way everything sits in place without calling attention to its boundaries. That's the intention: geometry turned to motion rather than imposed on it.

#### Decorative Revival Elements.

A key patio trend for 2026 is looking to the past for inspiration – reinterpreting historical styles in fresh, unexpected ways. For instance, elements of Spanish Revival design like textured stucco, arched openings and patterned tiles are showing up in modern patios that have no traditional roots. We might see tiled step risers, hand-forged iron used as shade lattice, and earthy colours like ochre and sea green integrated into structural forms. The goal isn't replication, but subtle references that blend historic cues into clean, contemporary outdoor spaces.

#### Nature-inspired materials.

Another trend that we have seen becoming increasingly popular is furniture that is taking its design inspiration straight from nature. This move toward more natural materials reflects the growing desire to blur the boundaries between indoor and outdoor living, creating spaces that feel grounded and deeply connected to their surroundings. With materials like wood, acacia and rattan being the most popular choices for their durability in all weathers and aesthetic appeal, these pieces infuse the outdoor space with some of nature's charm. Rattan furniture in particular, is a popular option for this trend due to its traditional and timeless design, with rope weave and wooden garden furniture offering a more modern take, giving the outdoor space a bohemian, rustic vibe.

#### Statement pieces and sculptural forms.

This year we have also seen an increasing trend of outdoor furniture pieces that make for a bold design statement – straying away from the conventional garden décor. Embracing sculptural forms and eye-catching silhouettes, this trend turns everyday outdoor furniture into functional art. Used as a way to create visual intrigue, these pieces can anchor a space and bring a more expressive, design-forward approach to outdoor living. From curved daybeds that resemble modern art installations to cocoon-style hanging chairs and multi-purpose sectional sofas, these pieces command attention and effortlessly transform the vibe of the outdoor space. Whether styling a small city terrace or creating a relaxed outdoor retreat, sculptural outdoor furniture is a trend that transforms an outdoor space into a space that feels as artful as it is inviting.

#### Tech-enhanced outdoor spaces.

With the world becoming so centralised around technology, it is no surprise that it is now permeating our outdoor spaces. Whether it be motorised LED pergolas, automated plant care devices or smart colour-changing lighting, garden furniture with integrated technology is on the rise. Making it easy to create an aesthetically pleasing space that is easy to maintain, outdoor tech allows us to create an atmosphere garden unique to our style and our outdoor needs. dw





**Concept**

As its name suggests, the Sunset Collection is designed to bring peace and tranquility to contemporary outdoor spaces, thanks to a seating system that combines the comfort typical of home furnishings with the durability required for outdoor environments. Generous proportions and minimalist design create a balanced and welcoming aesthetic, while the painted metal structure ensures solidity and durability.

**The detail**

A distinctive feature of the collection is the striped outdoor fabrics, chosen for their ability to withstand the elements without compromising on their strong graphic identity. A bold visual statement that gives the furnishings personality and makes them the focal point of the space, in both residential and contract settings.

**Materials**

The Sunset collection features a careful selection of materials and fabric coverings, designed to offer high outdoor



performance while maintaining a refined aesthetic. The metal structure ensures stability and resistance to atmospheric agents, while the high-quality outdoor fabrics guarantee comfort, durability, and color stability over time.

The powder-coated finish completes the design with a clean, contemporary

look, offering a wide range of color combinations that make the collection highly customisable and suitable for a variety of outdoor environments. A design that brings the language of indoor design outdoors, in true Diviana style. [dw](http://www.diviana.in)

[www.diviana.in](http://www.diviana.in)

## The Top Indian Luxury Brand Diviana Presents The Sunset Collection

Designed by Art Director  
Marco Corti

**O**n the occasion of Milan Design Week 2026, Diviana, India's leading luxury contemporary furniture brand, returns to Milan for the second consecutive year to present Sunset Collection, its first outdoor range that blends the language of indoor furniture with the needs of open spaces. The project, designed by Art Director Marco Corti, will be on display at Diviana's flagship store in Via Monte di Pietà 13/1, and presents a sophisticated and versatile vision of outdoor living, capable of adapting to architectural contexts as well as more extreme and natural landscapes.



## ITACA:

A Tailor-Made Oasis Of  
Relaxation That Combines  
Functionality And Style  
In A Perfect Balance

Talenti, the top brand of high-end outdoor furniture and more, for Design Week continues its exploratory journey in search of the new frontiers of outdoor design. After following the journey of Jason, who landed in Africa, Japan and sailed through Venice, in Milan it turns into the Homer of design by proposing Itaca, the collection designed by Carlo Colombo that accepts no compromises and like Ulysses is ready to embark on a sensory journey towards the boundaries of the known world. With this intriguing premise, Talenti and the celebrated architect from Como return to collaborate after the success of the Tressé collection, and if for the previous one the inspiration was fashion, this time it is mythology with its otherworldly charm.

**Itaca: A Positive Odyssey Between  
Comfort And Elegance**

In Homer's famous work, Ithaca was the safe harbour, the place to return to in order to embrace Penelope and live in harmony after the hardships of war. Carlo Colombo transfers this desire for inner peace by creating a collection that invites you to experience your outdoor space with elegance, comfort and inspiration. Through the kaleidoscope of aesthetic creativity, Colombo overturns the concept of odyssey, transforming it from a negative via crucis into a sensory journey without limits, a journey towards the self discovery and the discovery of the world around us. Ithaca is not just a destination, but a symbol of return and hope, of transformation and inner research. Just like Ulysses who never ceases to aspire to his return, Itaca invites you to discover and rediscover the beauty of your own corner of paradise outdoors, creating moments of peace in the luxury of your own garden.

**A Moving Island, A Tailor-Made Oasis**

Just like the legendary island in the Ionian Sea that offers refuge after long



crossings overcoming the pitfalls, the elements of the Itaca collection reflect this idea of continuous movement, transformation and discovery, becoming the destination where one can seek refuge, where one can find one's own balance, and where every time outdoors becomes a unique experience. The Itaca collection not only offers elegance and comfort, but also adapts to the desires and needs of those who choose it. Thanks to its modular structure, it can be configured to suit the space and style of the surrounding environment, allowing the creation of unique compositions, even island compositions. This flexible design allows you to transform your relax corner into a true oasis of conviviality, where each element can be freely positioned, generating solutions that welcome the user in an embrace of comfort and refinement. Like a journey that is shaped at every stage, Itaca offers the freedom to explore infinite combinations by combining the modular sofa with loungers, armchairs, tables and chairs to create coordinated and complete environments in full Talenti style.

**Let's Give The Floor To Carlo Colombo**

The Itaca collection completely customisable and stands out for the generosity of its soft curves that confer



lightness and fluidity of form, inviting relaxation and comfort. The wood used for the frames gives warmth and naturalness, recalling the connection with the outdoor environment. The marble, elegant and resistant, is used as a decorative and functional element, enhancing aesthetics and ensuring durability. Each piece is designed to tell a story of style and quality.

#### Talenti outdoor living

Talenti is an Umbrian company specialised in the design and

manufacture of outdoor furniture that combines elegance, functionality and quality. Talenti's collections, signed by international designers such as Ludovica Serafini+Roberto Palomba, Ramón Esteve, Marco Acerbis, Jean Philippe Nuel, Christophe Pillet, Carlo Colombo and new entry Teresa Sapey, offer dining and living products characterised by a strong reference to the indoor world, suitable for both contract and residential projects. Over the years, the company has shown increasing attention to the world of design

and now offers products with its collections that can satisfy not only the most classic tastes, but also the most contemporary ones. In consolidating its identity over time, Talenti has shown a strong focus on the global market and is currently present in more than 70 countries with a qualified and articulated sales network. Each year the company also participates in major trade fairs in the industry and its products are chosen for international realisations. [dw](#)

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

## Nalu Collection Renews Itself:

Talenti's "Nouvelle Vague" Lights Up In Yellow Amid Stripes, Geometric Textures And New Outdoor Atmospheres

Designed by Ludovica Serafini + Roberto Palomba, the collection evolves through a new yellow chromatic interpretation, expressed through solid colours, iconic stripes and new textile interpretations with a strong decorative character. A project that confirms Talenti's vision of an increasingly sophisticated, emotional and transversal outdoor living.

Some collections follow trends, others succeed in defining an imaginary world. Nalu, designed by Ludovica Serafini + Roberto Palomba for Talenti, belongs to the latter category: a family of furnishings capable of interpreting contemporary outdoor living as an aesthetic, sensory and architectural experience.

Following its debut during Milan Design Week, the collection now continues its evolutionary journey by

introducing a new chromatic variation that amplifies its visual identity: yellow. A luminous, vibrant and deeply Mediterranean shade that brings new energy to the collection through different textile interpretations, from solid colours to stripes and geometric textures with a strong decorative impact.

A choice that does not simply represent a palette update, but rather a further chapter in Talenti's design research on the relationship between colour, material and landscape.

#### The Meaning Of A Wave

Of Hawaiian origin, "Nalu" means "wave": an evocative term that perfectly encapsulates the essence of the collection. The wave as continuous movement, fluid harmony and natural strength. But also as an element capable of shaping surfaces, volumes and perceptions.

The reference to the sea runs throughout the entire project, reinforcing the connection between design and the nautical dimension, which has always been an integral part of the Talenti universe. Soft and enveloping shapes dialogue with rigorous and lightweight structures, creating a sophisticated balance between comfort and architecture.

#### A New Idea Of Contemporary Outdoor Living

With Nalu, Talenti interprets outdoor living as an open, flexible system increasingly close to the language of interior design. The collection includes sofas, lounge chairs, dining and coffee tables, sunbeds, seating and accessories, creating a coherent ecosystem in which every element interacts through materials, proportions and sartorial details.

The designers' approach is inspired by the great masters of Italian design from its golden years, reinterpreting their rigour through a contemporary sensibility.

"We started from the idea of a single cushion folding to generate both seat and backrest, like a wave," says Roberto Palomba. "We wanted to create visually light furnishings, almost suspended, capable of interacting with the surrounding environment and with light."

From this intuition comes a collection characterised by strong visual lightness: the volumes appear soft yet structured, the enveloping armrests define the space without weighing it down and the surfaces seem to float within the environment.

#### Textile As An Architectural Element

With the new yellow variation, textiles take on an even more central role within the collection, becoming both a design and decorative element.

Alongside the solid-colour version, Nalu introduces new textile interpretations with a strong decorative character. Stripes with a sophisticated seaside flavour interact with contemporary geometric textures that bring graphic depth and visual rhythm to the furnishings. A refined balance between retro memory and contemporary sensibility, capable of enhancing the rigorous lines of the metal structures and the softness of the cushions.

The textile component thus becomes a true narrative surface: not merely upholstery, but a tool capable of defining atmospheres, amplifying the relationship with light and transforming outdoor spaces into increasingly immersive and personal environments.

Yellow dialogues with the shades already present in the collection – warm white, red, deep blue and graphite – creating dynamic and scenic compositions.

"Nalu is a collection that explores colour in depth, especially through ceramics and textiles," underlines Roberto Palomba. "We wanted to work on living surfaces, never static, capable of changing with light."

#### Material Surfaces And Contemporary Craftsmanship

Research into materials finds one of its most distinctive expressions

in the ceramic stoneware table tops, characterised by a tile composition reminiscent of contemporary mosaics.

Each element is individually enamelled, generating shades and chromatic vibrations that create an almost liquid effect, enhancing the artisanal character of the collection and the continuous dialogue between industry and craftsmanship.

An aesthetic and material research that contributes to defining the sophisticated identity of Nalu, where decorative surfaces, technical materials and sartorial workmanship coexist in perfect balance.

#### The Talenti Multiverse

With Nalu, Talenti further strengthens its vision as an international lifestyle brand, expanding the concept of coordinated collections towards an increasingly immersive and transversal dimension.

Dedicated textiles, rugs, vases, accessories and complements become an integral part of the project, contributing to the creation of coherent and recognisable environments. The geometries of the cushions are reflected in the textile patterns, while the colour palettes create continuity between furnishings and decoration.

"We have always invested in the development of complete and coordinated solutions," says Edoardo Cameli, Talenti Commercial Director. "With Nalu, we wanted to take this approach to an even more evolved level, building a universe capable of dialoguing with architecture, hospitality and contemporary residences."

The collection indeed interprets the needs of a market increasingly oriented towards integrated outdoor projects,

where comfort, personalisation and visual identity become central elements.

#### Sustainability And Design Culture

A strong focus on sustainability accompanies the aesthetic research, considered by Talenti a fundamental value of contemporary design.

The collection's structures are entirely made of aluminium, a resistant, lightweight and fully recyclable material. The coverings are also specifically designed according to durability and technical quality criteria, while every element of the collection is completely disassemblable, favouring maintenance, recovery and a responsible life cycle.

A vision that reflects the company's desire to promote a design that is not only high-performing and sophisticated, but also conscious and durable over time.

#### A New Grammar Of Outdoor Living

Nalu perfectly embodies the growing contamination between indoor and outdoor, one of the most central themes in contemporary design. The generous proportions, textile research and softness of the shapes recall the comfort typical of domestic interiors, transferring it outdoors through highly performing materials.

The result is a transversal, elegant and versatile collection, designed to inhabit residential spaces, hospitality, yachts and contract architectures with the same naturalness.

More than a simple collection, Nalu thus represents a new grammar of outdoor living: free, fluid, emotional and deeply contemporary. dw

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



# Indoor Gardening



# Indoor Gardening Trends

by Stienie Greyling

Creating an indoor garden that matches your personal aesthetic can bring life into your home, adding a calming, natural vibe. Whether you are building a lush green corner or a minimalist display, thoughtful planning ensures an indoor garden is both stylish and functional.

Indoor gardening trends for 2025 – 2026 focus on creating sustainable, tech-enabled, and deeply personal green sanctuaries, featuring small-scale ecosystems, moody aesthetics and functional, edible plants. Key trends include moss terrariums, vertical planters for light spaces, rare variegated foliage, and AI-powered smart systems for easier maintenance.

Indoor gardening is a practical way to grow herbs, vegetables and decorative plants year-round, even in small apartments and homes. With the right light, soil and watering routine, one can create a thriving indoor garden that improves air quality and provides fresh produce. Indoor gardening is flexible, one can start small with a few herbs on a windowsill or invest in a hydroponic system for year-round harvests.



All indoor plants can benefit from houseplant rotation. It's exactly what it sounds like, turning plants every so often to encourage even, full growth by exposing all sides to sunlight. Not only does it prevent stretched, leggy stems, it also helps keep pests away by strengthening the plant and making it less inhabitable to them.

If floor space is limited, vertical gardens provide a stylish way to display plants while saving space and enhancing décor. They are perfect for succulents, herbs or small tropical plants and work well in kitchens, living rooms, or home offices. For larger spaces, potted floor plants like fiddle leaf figs or monstera can anchor the room, adding height and balance. Use decorative planters or elevated stands to seamlessly integrate these plants into your aesthetic.

Plants stands and tiered shelves offer dimension by displaying smaller plants like snake plants, succulents, and peace lilies at varying heights, creating depth and organisation. Optimal light ensures every plant thrives, no matter its placement. By combining a vertical garden, floor plants, and plant stands to achieve a layered, cohesive look, you can transform any room into a lush, relaxing retreat.

### Select Stylish Planters.

Planters play a key role in an indoor garden's aesthetic. Choose styles that fit your décor and ensure proper drainage for plant health.

- Ceramic pots: Sleek and modern, ideal for minimal interiors.
- Woven baskets: Great for a boho or rustic look.

- Hanging planters: Save floor space and create a dynamic visual effect.

Growing plants in a hydroponic system means no soil. This encourages greater growth and higher yield on factors that are more within your control, like added nutrients and strategic lighting. Have you ever propagated a pothos plant by sticking a cutting in water? That's basic hydroponics.

It is not a newly invented technology, only a refined one. These days, hydroponic gardening can range from scrappy DIY projects to ultra-high-tech investments.

Hydroponic growing holds a lot of promise, especially in fresh food-scarce areas or places with difficult weather patterns or depleted soils. It also uses less water since one is only watering the instead of the additional soil around the plant. There are several different approaches, depending on your resources.

Mini plants are really popular at the moment. Think small windowsill plants that inject skinny shelves, desk corners and kitchen counters with a flush of colour.

They are an affordable way for people to experiment with being a plant parent. You can have lots of varieties, and the right mini plant can genuinely enhance how a space feels and functions.

No matter how you like to style your houseplants, there is something for everyone on this list of 2026 houseplant trends. It doesn't matter if you only have a small amount of shelf space for houseplants, or a large conservatory waiting to be filled with foliage, there are so many ways to go above and beyond with indoor plants this year. dw





## Indoor Garden Trends: Designing Spaces That Restore Calm and Connection

By Andre Kruger | Landscaper and Owner of Garden Bleu Kramerville



At Garden Bleu Kramerville, the philosophy of modern garden design goes far beyond simply placing a few pot plants around a home. In today's fast-paced world, the latest shift in indoor and landscape design focuses on creating spaces that bring calmness, tranquillity and a deeper connection to nature, transforming interiors into curated green sanctuaries that enhance both wellbeing and everyday living.

Modern indoor garden trends are increasingly centred around the concept of "mini indoor jungles." Immersive botanical spaces layered with foliage, texture and natural elements. Rather than treating plants as accessories, homeowners and designers are integrating greenery as a core architectural and lifestyle feature.

One of the most prominent trends is the incorporation of structural planting elements during the construction or renovation phase. This includes built-

in indoor planter boxes, dedicated planting recesses, indoor courtyards and even seamless outdoor shower connections integrated into bathrooms with surrounding greenery. These design considerations create a stronger relationship between indoor and outdoor living while softening modern architectural spaces.

Feature plant walls have also become highly desirable, particularly in compact urban homes where floor space is limited. Oversized leaf varieties, suspended planters, terrariums and layered foliage displays are popular for their dramatic decorative impact and ability to create visual serenity.

Beyond aesthetics, the therapeutic value of plants has become a major driving force behind the indoor gardening movement. Apart from collecting rare plant species as a hobby, the proven horticultural and wellness benefits of caring for plants continue to influence both residential and commercial design trends.

Current plant selections increasingly prioritise species known for their air-purifying qualities and nighttime oxygen production. According to a study published in the *Journal of Physiological*

*Anthropology* (August 2023), the presence of plants in homes and office spaces contributes to reduced stress, increased comfort, improved productivity and may even assist in faster recovery from illness.

### Designing Your Own Indoor Garden Theme

Successful indoor gardens are often curated around a central design theme. Whether tropical, minimalist, sculptural or foliage-focused, the key lies in consistency of plant choice, texture and styling.

### Tropical-Inspired Spaces

For lush, tropical-inspired interiors, popular plant choices include:

- Monstera Deliciosa (Delicious Monster)
- Philodendron varieties such as Selloum, Xanadu, Brasil, and Heartleaf
- Strelitzia Reginae
- Pothos
- Ficus Benjamina
- Fiddle Leaf Fig (Ficus Lyrata)

These plants create bold architectural forms through varying leaf sizes and dramatic foliage.





**Serene Succulent & Cacti Displays**

For a more minimal and sculptural aesthetic, succulents and cacti remain timeless:

- Echeveria
- Aloes
- Haworthia varieties
- Snake Plant (Sansevieria)
- ZZ Plant (Zamioculcas zamiifolia)

These plants are ideal for low-maintenance environments while still creating strong visual interest.

**Foliage Retreats**

For softer, calming interiors inspired by wellness spaces:

- Boston Ferns
- Maidenhair Ferns
- Bird's Nest Ferns
- Peace Lilies (Spathiphyllum)
- Calathea varieties
- Mounted Staghorn Ferns (Platycerium bifurcatum)

Layering these varieties creates a tranquil retreat atmosphere with rich texture and movement.

**Styling & Display**

The way plants are displayed is equally important as the plant selection itself.

Creating varying heights through shelves, plant stands, hanging installations, and wall-mounted planters adds dimension and visual flow to a space.

At Garden Bleu Kramerville, we offer a curated range of decorative pots, plant stands, baskets, shelves and wrought iron display solutions. Many of which can be custom designed and manufactured according to a client's specific aesthetic and spatial requirements.

When styling indoor gardens, cohesion is key. Decorative containers should complement the existing interior design language of the home. Glazed ceramics, terracotta pots, woven baskets and natural textures all contribute to a layered yet harmonious environment.

A useful styling approach is grouping similar materials together. For example, clustering terracotta planters separately from glazed ceramics or woven baskets to maintain visual consistency.

For a refined finish, exposed soil can be covered with decorative bark, pebbles, gravel or moss.

**Caring for Indoor Gardens**

Indoor plant care should always consider light, humidity, and airflow. While many indoor species require bright environments, direct sunlight can often

damage foliage. Grouping plants with similar watering requirements together simplifies maintenance and promotes healthier growth.

Technology is also becoming increasingly integrated into plant care, with smart moisture meters and app-enabled monitoring systems helping homeowners track moisture levels, sunlight exposure, and room temperature directly from their phones.

Humidity-loving tropical plants may benefit from occasional misting or humidifiers, particularly during dry winter months.

Good air circulation remains essential in preventing mould, pests and fungal issues and regular plant inspections are recommended to maintain healthy indoor ecosystems.

Indoor gardens are no longer simply decorative additions, they are becoming essential lifestyle features that support wellness, beauty and meaningful living. dw

**Contact**

- Andre Kruger**
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  - 082 893 5669



Design Shapes



Decker Side Tables by Mary Ratcliffe Studio  
Photo credit: Ryan McCoy

## Five Female-Led Studios Champion Canadian Furniture and Lighting at WANTED New York

New York, United States

New York Design Week will see five Canadian studios converge at WANTED within ICFF (International Contemporary Furniture Fair) to present Soft Structure, an all-female-led collaborative exhibition featuring lighting studio Anony, furniture

designer Mary Ratcliffe Studio, industrial design practices Maha Alavi Studio and Simone Ferkul Projects, and glass designer Sylvia Lee. Together, they present a series of market-ready works shaped through a shared exploration of form, material, and emotion, where subtle gestures of

shape and material bring softness to structure - inviting moments of intimacy, vulnerability, and resilience as integral elements of contemporary design.

### Rebalancing the scales of product design

As a collective, the group reflected the profound irony that women influence 94% of household design purchases while comprising only 19% of industrial design professionals. By presenting 'Soft Structure', the collective is reclaiming a product design process that reflects the intuition and values of those who inhabit it.

In a global cultural landscape that often feels increasingly rigid, Soft Structure is an exploration of the importance of an empathetic perspective in design. Acknowledging that physical surroundings directly shape our thoughts and actions, these studios examine the quiet power of the 'subtle gesture' - a soft curve, a tactile surface, or a gentle light as an imperative component of the design process.

### Empathy embodied in form and materials

Sylvia Lee on her 'Geo Sconce' hand-blown glass lighting collection for The



Node Chandelier by Anony  
Photo credit: Scott Norsworthy



Geo Sconces by Sylvia Lee @ The Goodman Studio  
Photo credit: Worker Bee Supply



Maha Alavi  
Photo credit: Natasha Vik



Sylvia Lee  
Photo credit: n/a



Simone Ferkul  
Photo credit: Lauren Kolya



Decker Side Table by Mary Ratcliffe Studio  
Photo credit: Ryan McCoy



Lithic Lounge Chair by Maha Alavi Studio  
Photo credit: Singyu Lam

Goodman Studio: "I imagined standing on a bridge and looking down at the smooth stones in a river, perpetually shaped by two constant life forces - water and time. These wall-mounted illuminated bowls, both alive with bold colours, but muted by a gentle sandblasted finish, captured that moment."

Mary Ratcliffe on her 'Decker' side tables "The Decker side table is part of our latest collection, 'Carver', inspired by the freedom and fluidity of surfing and skateboarding. These tables are intended to capture the feeling of agility with their tightly radiused corners and versatile, rounded triangular shape."

Maha Alavi on her 'Lithic' Lounge Chair "Rooted in ancient craftsmanship and inspired by prehistoric forms, the LITHIC Lounge Chair evokes ancient cave drawings and the enduring strength of rudimentary joinery, balancing gentle curves with a low, grounded profile. Crafted from solid red oak, its carefully machined details and generous, exaggerated cushion invite touch and conversation from every angle. The LITHIC series channels the timeless poetry of Stonehenge and early human creativity — melding history with modern softness."

**Simone Ferkul on her 'Attic' Stools**

"The Attic Stool is a study in quiet elegance and spatial clarity - a piece defined by its simple silhouette and the interplay of architectural planes. Its form is composed of intersecting horizontal and vertical elements that create a visual dialogue - the seat, a clean, uninterrupted plane, appears to float above planner legs that suggest both stability and lightness. This balance between lift and



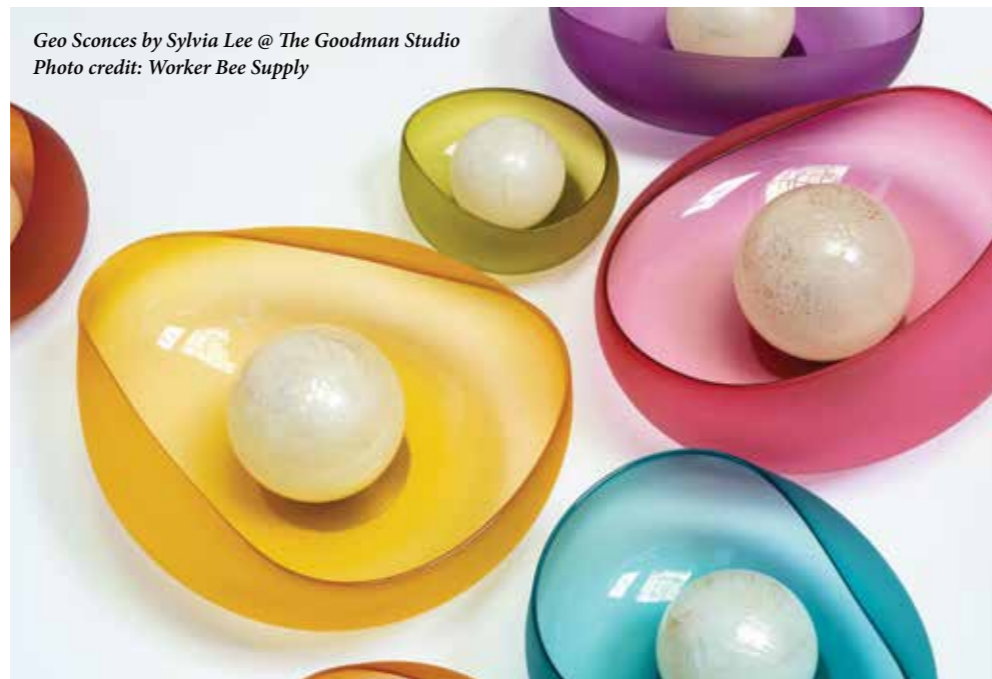
Mary Ratcliffe  
Photo credit: Ryan McCoy



Christian Lo  
Photo credit: Renata Kaveh



Lithic Lounge Chair by Maha Alavi Studio  
Photo credit: Singyu Lam



Geo Sconces by Sylvia Lee @ The Goodman Studio  
Photo credit: Worker Bee Supply



Node Chandelier by Anony  
Photo credit: Scott Norsworthy



Geo Sconces by Sylvia Lee @ The Goodman Studio  
Photo credit: Worker Bee Supply

## DESIGN SHAPES

groundedness lends the stool its quiet presence.”

### Christian Lo on her ‘Node’ Chandelier

“The Node Light uses the language of circles to present a delicate imbalance. A glass sphere traces its perimeter through a steel cylinder, attached at the source of light: an LED, the node. The material contrasts of weight and opacity add to the imbalancing act.”

### Beyond convention

Bringing together a collective with decades of design and manufacturing expertise - and a proven track record of commercial success - these studios continue to push beyond convention. Working across wood, glass, stone, metal, and textile, they demonstrate that softness is not bound to a single material, but can be expressed in any medium. Grounded in experience, yet driven by exploration, their work reflects a shared commitment to integrity in design and a belief that how something feels is just as important as how it performs.

- @simoneferkul
- @the.goodmanstudio
- @mahalavi
- @anonymystudio
- @maryratcliffestudio

dw

[www.anony.ca](http://www.anony.ca)  
[www.thegoodmanstudio.com](http://www.thegoodmanstudio.com)  
[www.simoneferkul.com](http://www.simoneferkul.com)  
[www.maryratcliffe.studio](http://www.maryratcliffe.studio)



Decker Side Table by Mary Ratcliffe Studio  
Photo credit: Ryan McCoy



Node Chandelier by Anony  
Photo credit: Attic Stool



Node Chandelier by Anony  
Photo credit: Jake Sherman



Lithic Lounge Chair by Maha Alavi Studio  
Photo credit: Singyu Lam



Geo Sconces by Sylvia Lee @ The Goodman Studio  
Photo credit: Worker Bee Supply



Decker Side Table by Mary Ratcliffe Studio  
Photo credit: Ryan McCoy



Attic Stool by Simone Ferkul  
Photo credit: Riley Snelling

# Mediterranean Urbanity



## JARDINS SECRETS

A Duo of Bioclimatic Shells  
at Montpellier's  
Cité Créative

Delivered in March 2026 within the emblematic programme “Jardins Secrets”, two residential buildings by Vincent Callebaut Architectures have now entered the city of Montpellier at a human scale, at the heart of the Cité Créative, on the historic

site of the former École d'Application de l'Infanterie (EAI).

The project comprises Théia for Bouygues Immobilier (75 housing units, including 17 affordable ones, 5,364 m<sup>2</sup>) and Opale & Sens for Vestia Groupe (38 housing units, including 11 affordable ones, 2,845 m<sup>2</sup>), bringing together 113 homes designed in close alignment with the issues of RE2020, biodiversity and social mixity.

*“The residences unfold as bioclimatic, shell-like envelopes shaped by the Mediterranean Sea, sun and wind, creating a breathable microclimate.”*

Vincent Callebaut

Awarded in the competition launched by the City of Montpellier in 2021, these two developments were later honoured with the “Silver Pyramid for Global Quality” (La Pyramide d'Argent de la Qualité Globale), awarded by the Real Estate Developers Federation of Occitanie-Mediterranean (Fédération des Promoteurs Immobiliers d'Occitanie-Méditerranée) in autumn 2024.

A Mediterranean manifesto inspired by Art Nouveau

The “Jardins Secrets” project responds to a dual challenge: respecting the memory of a former military site and inventing a new generation of dense, green and regenerative Mediterranean urbanity. Located less than one kilometer from the historical center of Montpellier's Ecusson as the crow flies, it integrates seamlessly into the city's suburbs, engaging in dialogue with the refined, orderly neighbouring heritage architectures, while asserting a resolutely organic language.

Between Art Nouveau and contemporary biomimicry, “Jardins Secrets” calls on Victor Horta, Antonio Gaudí and Émile Gallé to reactivate a tradition of ornament, this time placed at the service of climate and nature. The façades of Théia and Opale & Sens unfold like architectural shells, true exoskeletons delicately shaped by light and wind. These urban shells alternate between protective envelope and porous structure, filtering the sun, channeling air currents and offering the inhabitants a gentle, stabilised microclimate.





These mineral laces, entirely composed of convex and concave curves, behave like finely bisected moucharabiehs, where waves sculpt the shade and set the light in motion. They optimise thermal inertia, solar protection and natural ventilation, while recalling that the right angle does not exist in nature and that architecture can conform to its fluid, generous forms.

This “Art Nouveau 2.0” writing expresses a vision: an architecture that is sensitive, performative and anchored in the Genius Loci, where “form follows climate”, parametrised according to the sun’s path and the prevailing wind axis. Here, the shell becomes a living model: an intelligent envelope, both poetic and rational, protecting the inhabitants like a natural habitat, while opening up to life and the Mediterranean context, much like a conch catching the sunlight, the breath of the sea and the murmur of the wind.

**Ecology, climate and regenerative biodiversity**

At the heart of the Cité Créative, “Jardins Secrets” participates in a continuous landscape with the neighbouring Parc Montcalm, forming an ecological corridor where built and vegetated spaces interact in permanence.

**The project puts into practice:**

- rainwater harvesting and greywater recycling for the irrigation of suspended gardens in a closed loop;
- a low-carbon structure combined with high-performance thermal insulation;
- dense vegetation inspired by Mediterranean garrigue, creating an urban cool island through evapotranspiration and a sanctuary for local fauna and endemic flora.

The two buildings rely on shared renewable energy sources: connection to the district biomass boiler and installation of photovoltaic panels on the roofs, to maintain very low energy consumption at the level of the eco-neighbourhood, in line with current performance standards.

**A dense yet porous urban morphology**

The 113 housing units (75 at Théia, 38 at Opale & Sens) gather around a large ground-floor courtyard in open soil, a true vegetal sponge penetrated by trees rooted directly in the earth. This device



combats soil sealing and rainwater runoff, at the same time reinforcing the thermal comfort of the ensemble.

The project articulates with the neighbourhood through:

- public pedestrian walkways connecting the Cité Créative;
- shaded private alleys and vegetated patios optimising summer comfort;
- ground-floor levels raised by one metre (at the request of the chief urban planner) to preserve the privacy of residents while respecting the height of preserved heritage buildings.

**Théia** : 75 housing units, including 17 affordable ones

Developed for Bouygues Immobilier, Théia occupies an “L”-shaped massing in R+5 along rue Frida Kahlo (east) and in R+3 along the lane leading to the future, rehabilitated cinema “Le Cocon” (south).

The apartments, from T2 to T5, are cross-ventilated or multi-orientated, with two key typological devices:

- Deep loggias of 3.5 m, overlooking the heart of the plot and the skyline, which extend the living room as a “bonus room”, with privacy ensured by curved raised planters;
- Haussmann-style balconies for the bedrooms, with curved wrought-iron railings.

The roofs are developed as accessible terraces, offering panoramic views over the Montpellier landscape, while the outer corner of the “L” faces the arrival of the recently delivered tram line 5.

To preserve the open soil of the central garden, the shared parking, naturally ventilated by a large central patio, is contained beneath the buildings, while soft mobility is enhanced by well-designed bicycle rooms on the ground floor and a basement car park.

**Opale & Sens** : 38 housing units, including 11 affordable ones

For Vestia Groupe, Opale & Sens rises to R+3, with a double-top-floor duplex at R+4/R+5 set back by 3.5 m around its entire perimeter, along allée Mila Racine.



The building's core is pierced by a full-height central patio, which provides:

- natural ventilation for the dwellings;
- a calm urban buffer hosting access to the lobbies and the bicycle rooms.
- The façades alternate between:
- vegetated loggias for the living rooms, facing the heart of the plot and the angles;
- Haussmann-style balconies for the bedrooms, facing the street.

The ground-floor apartments benefit from private elevated gardens, while continuous balconies draw sweeping waves along the more intensively planted façade facing the garden, strengthening the efficiency of an urban “cool island”.

**Towards regenerative urbanity**

At the heart of the Cité Créative, “Jardins Secrets” embodies a new generation of resolutely regenerative urbanity: dense yet porous housing, community gardens in open soil, shaded alleys, attics and densely vegetated roof terraces, material and energy sobriety, and shared renewable energy.

**Drawing on Mediterranean ecosystems, the project moves beyond simple sustainability to produce:**

- social ties around shared spaces and communal gardens;
- the restoration of ecological cycles (water, energy, biodiversity);
- climate and landscape resilience adapted to contemporary challenges.

With “Jardins Secrets”, Art Nouveau finds a 2.0 expression, both poetic and deeply ecological. Théia and Opale & Sens embody a design philosophy where architecture draws inspiration from the living world to coexist with it, reconciling aesthetics, performance and well-being within an affordable housing framework.

Architecture thus becomes a mediator between the inhabitant, the climate and nature, articulating comfort, sobriety and landscape in a renewed constructive language.

[www.vincent.callebaut.org](http://www.vincent.callebaut.org)

## The Educational Complex Sirius

Sochi, Russia

The Educational Complex Sirius redefines the school as a decentralised urban campus composed of autonomous yet interconnected clusters to serve the needs of the entire district.

The project comprises four main functional clusters: a primary school, a secondary school, a sports cluster, and a congress centre. These volumes are unified by a network of public spaces – open boulevards, plazas, atriums, and landscaped terraces – that transform the site into a “miniature city”. This urban morphology introduces a diversity of spatial typologies typically absent from conventional school buildings: streets, squares, parks, and communal courtyards become integral parts of daily learning and social life.

All functional blocks are connected at the second-floor level by enclosed



pedestrian bridges, ensuring safe and weather-protected circulation for students. Each block is internally organised around a central atrium that serves as a flexible hub for gatherings, informal learning, exhibitions, and community events. The interior programming responds to age-specific needs and interests, with dedicated zones including group study pods, open-access laboratories and workshops, technology and art clusters, natural science hubs, libraries, dining areas, and administrative units.

Classroom spaces are designed for maximum adaptability. Movable partitions allow multiple rooms to be reconfigured for various formats: traditional lessons, double-period sessions, academic competitions, lectures, or public presentations. This flexibility supports evolving pedagogical models and community programming beyond school hours.

A distinctive feature of the complex is its system of specialised libraries, each functioning as a competence centre for interdisciplinary collaboration, peer mentoring, and cross-age team projects. Complementing these are shared creative



studios and maker spaces that facilitate a gentle transition for preschoolers into formal education and, eventually, adult life.

Responding to the southern climate, the design incorporates extensive green roofs, shaded terraces, and outdoor dining areas that double as observation decks overlooking the adjacent ornithological park. These elevated platforms extend the learning environment into nature, offering opportunities for environmental education and wildlife observation.

Sustainability is embedded throughout the project. Strategies include photovoltaic panels for renewable energy generation, CO<sub>2</sub> sensors for indoor air quality monitoring, abundant natural daylighting, cross-ventilation optimised through building orientation, rainwater management systems, and a continuous green framework that integrates the complex into the regional landscape.

Designed to withstand seismic activity up to magnitude 9, and elevated to mitigate flood risk, the complex combines resilience with openness. Its public-facing layout allows individual blocks to operate independently as cultural or leisure venues outside school hours, reinforcing the institution's role as a district-wide attraction and resource. dw



Technical sheet

- **Location:** Sochi, Russia
- **Project:** 2024
- **Site area:** 5.8 Ha
- **Total area:** 73 800 m<sup>2</sup>
- **Number of students:** 2.500
- **Project team:** Anton Nadtochiy, Vera Butko, Petr Alimov, Anna Vorobyova, Anastasia Galutkina, Artem Karpets, Ekaterina Kotlova, Olga Yefimova, Olga Kozak, Diana Mingazova, Yana Oshkina, Ivan Khripkov, Nikita Rybin, Yuri Uymanov, Yulia Mazurova, Almira Shagiakhmetova
- **Photo credit:** ATRIUM

[www.atriumarchitecture.com/project/educational-somplex-sirius](http://www.atriumarchitecture.com/project/educational-somplex-sirius)



- **Location:** 4 Front St E, Toronto, ON M5E 1G4
- **Client:** David Minicucci and Rob Rossi
- **Architect:** Daniel Johnson Architect Inc.
- **Landscape Architect:** II BY IV DESIGN
- **Interior Design:** II BY IV DESIGN
- **Construction:** BLT Construction
- **Fabricators (Millwork + Furniture):** RFP Design Group Inc
- **Fabricators (Upholstered Seating):** Louis Interiors
- **Fabricators (Custom Light Fixtures):** Anony
- **Custom Chairs:** REPUBLIC OF II BY IV
- **Fabricators (Ceiling Plaster Installation):** Studio Alvo
- **Fabricators (Custom Exterior Doors):** Classic Crystal
- **Fabricators (Custom Planters + Exterior Patio):** Rose Perri
- **Fabricators (Exterior Marble Bench):** Kreoo
- **Art Consultant:** II BY IV DESIGN
- **Photography:** David Whittaker
- **Stone:** Ciot
- **Mosaic:** Sisis North America Inc
- **Glass (architectural):** Acura Glass
- **Specialty Glass:** Goodman Studio
- **Tile (Bar Feature):** Viúva Lamego
- **Brick (exterior façade):** GlenGery
- **Wood:** M. Bohlke Veneer & Lumber
- **Floors (Kitchen Flooring):** LSI Floors
- **Fabric:** CTL Leathers
- **Fabric:** Wollsdorf Leather

## SAMMARCO Awarded Best Restaurant Design and Named Among Canada's 100 Best Restaurants 2026

Toronto, Canada

II BY IV DESIGN is proud to announce that SAMMARCO, Toronto's newest addition to the hospitality scene, has been recognised by Canada's 100 Best Restaurants with three major distinctions in 2026. The restaurant has been awarded Best Restaurant Design, ranked No. 7 on the Best New Restaurants list, and placed No. 37 on Canada's 100 Best Restaurants overall.

Canada's 100 Best Restaurants continues to set the benchmark for the nation's culinary landscape, earning recognition as a trusted authority among food and beverage enthusiasts nationwide. Its highly anticipated annual rankings celebrate the country's top restaurants and bars, spotlighting the attention to detail, sophistication, and innovation that define excellence, while also honouring the talented individuals and teams behind these exceptional experiences.

### Canada's Best Restaurant Design Award 2026

SAMMARCO is recognised for its exceptional craftsmanship and meticulous attention to detail, from terrazzo floors and a sculpted ceiling to bespoke lighting elements. Being honoured alongside some of Canada's most outstanding dining spaces marks a significant achievement.

SAMMARCO is the result of a collaborative effort by an exceptional team whose creativity, innovation, and precision have shaped both the physical space and its culinary offering. II BY IV DESIGN was instrumental in achieving this vision inspired by global travel and experience. Seasoned restaurateur David Minicucci and Michelin starred Chef Rob Rossi played integral roles in bringing the vision to life, drawing on their extensive experience in the food and beverage industry.

### Canada's Best New Restaurant 2026 NO.7

Since opening in spring 2025, SAMMARCO has exceeded expectations under the culinary leadership of Minicucci and Rossi. As their third culinary venture, following the success of the Michelin starred Osteria Giulia and Michelin recommended Giulietta, SAMMARCO represents a natural evolution of their collaboration. It was therefore a deliberate and seamless choice for II BY IV DESIGN to partner with Minicucci and Rossi. Together, they have created a distinctive new presence within Toronto's culinary landscape, shaped by design innovation, culinary precision, and a compelling sense of storytelling.

### Canada's 100 Best Restaurants 2026 No. 37


In a country celebrated for its dynamic and diverse culinary scene, SAMMARCO's

placement at No. 37 reflects the seamless integration of thoughtful interiors, refined cuisine, and attentive service. This recognition underscores the strength of a unified vision, where every element works in harmony to create an exceptional and memorable guest experience.

Canada's 100 Best evaluates its annual rankings using a holistic set of criteria, including quality of food, overall guest experience, depth of the wine program, and interior design. The list is determined by votes from a distinguished panel of culinary enthusiasts, food writers and critics, chefs, restaurateurs, and industry professionals.

Inspired by the international travels of II BY IV DESIGN partners Dan Menchions and Keith Rushbrook, SAMMARCO is rooted in the convergence of design, history, and culinary artistry. With a strong emphasis on the holistic guest experience, the restaurant redefines dining by crafting a narrative that begins the moment guests walk through its doors.

Together, these recognitions mark a significant milestone for SAMMARCO and reaffirm its place within Canada's

evolving culinary dialogue. By uniting visionary design with refined cuisine and a deeply considered guest experience, SAMMARCO exemplifies a holistic approach to hospitality, one that continues to shape and elevate Toronto's dining landscape while setting a new standard for excellence across the country. 

### Technical sheet

- **Project Name:** SAMMARCO

[www.iibyiv.com/project/sammarco/](http://www.iibyiv.com/project/sammarco/)



South Africa's  
architecture  
practice Hubo  
Studio Wins Two  
Global Architizer  
A+Awards

Johannesburg, South Africa

Johannesburg-based architecture practice Hubo Studio is proud to announce that it has won two prestigious Architizer A+Awards, marking an extraordinary achievement for South African architecture on the global stage.

Hubo Studio's Redhill Early Learning Centre was named the Jury Winner in the Best Kindergarten category, placing the project at the forefront of early learning design worldwide. The project was also awarded the Popular Choice Winner in the Educational Interiors category, a result made possible through the overwhelming support of the wider community.

The Architizer A+Awards celebrate the world's best architecture annually, recognising excellence across a wide range of categories, from individual buildings to global design practices. Winners are selected both by an international jury of leading architects, designers and cultural

figures, and through the Popular Choice vote, which invites the global public to support their favourite projects.

While Hubo Studio is deeply honoured to have received the Jury Award, the Popular Choice Award holds a particularly special meaning for the studio. It reflects the incredible support of the people around us: our clients, collaborators, friends, families and wider community, who came together to champion this project. Seeing so many people take the time to vote, share and support Hubo Studio was a powerful reminder that architecture is never created in isolation. It is shaped by the communities it serves and celebrated by the communities that believe in it.

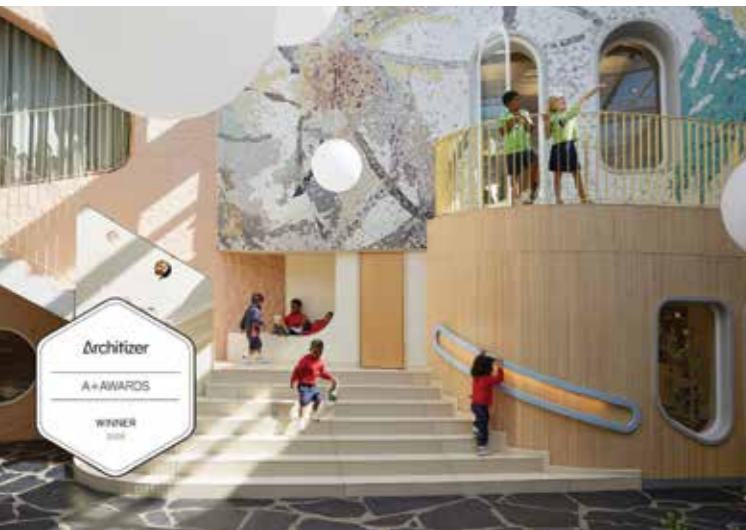
The Redhill Early Learning Centre, located in Johannesburg, is widely recognised as a pioneering educational environment. Designed around principles of child-centred learning, the project

reimagines the school as a "mini city": a network of interconnected spaces that promote curiosity, independence and collaboration. Its central piazza, vertical ateliers and seamless integration of indoor and outdoor environments create a dynamic landscape for early childhood development.

For Hubo Studio, these awards are a celebration of design, education and community. To receive recognition from an international jury is an immense honour. To also receive the Popular Choice Award, thanks to the votes and support of the community, makes this achievement especially meaningful.

Hubo Studio is deeply grateful to everyone who stood behind the studio, believed in the project and helped showcase South African architecture to the world.

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





Black Gold Museum, Encounter Section  
Photo credit: Black Gold Museum



Black Gold Museum, Encounter Section  
Photo credit: Black Gold Museum

## Black Gold Museum Where Oil Becomes Art

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia



Black Gold Museum, Doubts Section  
Photo credit: Black Gold Museum



Black Gold Museum, Dreams Section  
Photo credit: La Méduse

Located within the iconic KAPSARC building designed by Zaha Hadid Architects, the Black Gold Museum reveals a new kind of museum, transforming the exhibition experience into a narrative journey.

### A curatorial vision at the origin

At the origin of the project lies a simple observation: oil is everywhere in our daily lives, and yet remains largely invisible. This paradox became the starting point of the curatorial vision developed by Christian Janicot, who conceived the museum as an artistic investigation into how oil has shaped our imagination, our environments, and our societies.

"This awareness fascinated me. How could a substance so crucial to our civilization remain so overlooked? I then embarked on an artistic inquiry: had artists grasped this reality? Painters, sculptors, photographers, designers... had they explored our addiction to this raw material?," asks Christian Janicot, Curator. "From this intuition, the Black Gold Museum was born: a unique place where art reveals the invisible, where artists become the narrators of this civilizational adventure. For who better than them can make us see what we no

longer perceive? Who better than them can transform raw material into emotion, into questioning, into beauty?"

The Black Gold Museum was not born from a commission, but from a vision brought forward: the idea that oil could become the subject of a major artistic, cultural, and human narrative. In the very heart of the kingdom of oil, the Museums Commission (Ministry of Culture), together with the Ministry of Energy and KAPSARC, had the vision and boldness to bring such an unprecedented project to life. What may appear evident today was in fact a remarkable cultural ambition: to approach oil not as an industrial subject, but as a civilizational story to be explored through art, design, and immersive experience.

The museum brings together more than 350 artworks by leading international artists from a wide range of disciplines: photography, installation, sculpture, painting, film, comics, design, fashion, digital practices, and more. Figures such as Wim Delvoye, Adel Abdessemed, Jimmie Durham, Edward Burtynsky, Christo, or Ugo Rondinone are presented alongside leading Saudi artists including Ahmed Mater and Muhannad Shono.

This diversity allows for a multiplicity of perspectives and sensibilities. Together, they trace a unique narrative, a "love story" between humanity and oil, a universal metaphor to link both intimacy and collective experience.

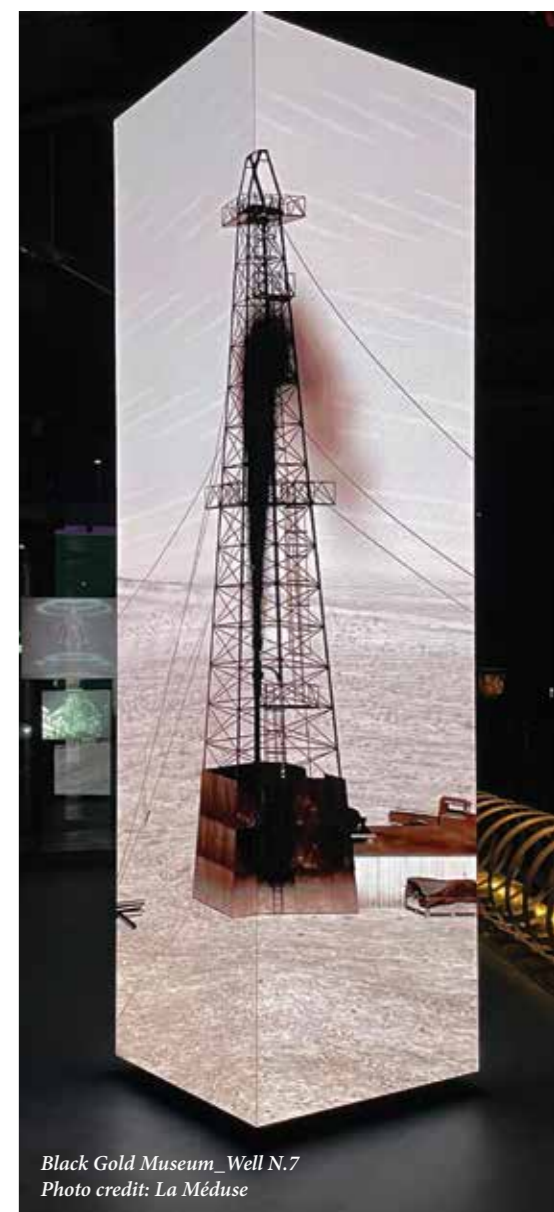
Structured across four chapters - Encounter, Dreams, Doubts, and Visions - the museum unfolds as a journey through time, from fascination and expansion to dependency and transformation. Each sequence explores a specific period, placing artworks in dialogue with the historical, cultural, and social issues related to oil.

### A museum conceived by an international design team

The Black Gold Museum is conceived as a total experience, where narrative, space, light, and image converge into a seamless immersive journey. Rather than a juxtaposition of disciplines, the project is driven by a close dialogue between curator and designers, shaping a coherent and sensitive environment.

The design team brings unique expertise developed across major heritage museums, fine arts institutions, and luxury maisons. This dual culture is central to the project: it allows the museum to combine rigour and emotion, knowledge and immersion.

Agence NC, led by Nathalie Crinière, creates a spatial dramaturgy, where the scenography unfolds as a carefully composed sequence of spaces. Each chapter is defined by its own materiality, atmosphere, and sensory intensity, from dense, mineral environments to lighter, more luminous spaces, offering a progression that supports both the story and the visitor's experience.

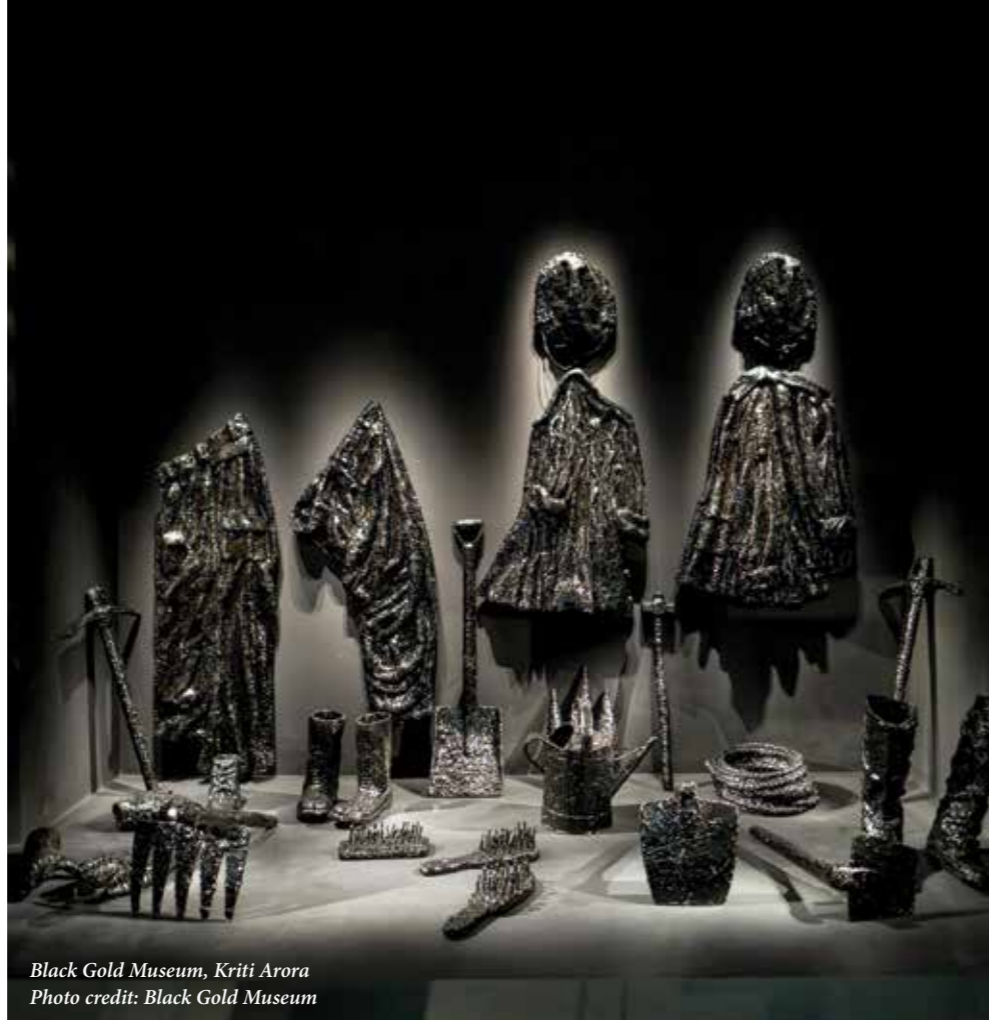


Black Gold Museum, Well N.7  
Photo credit: La Méduse

"At Agence NC, we design permanent museums ranging from classical fine arts institutions, such as the Musée Carnavalet, to luxury environments like the La Galerie Dior," explains Nathalie Crinière. "With the Black Gold Museum, we had the opportunity to imagine a particularly vibrant scenography, creating atmospheres through meaningful materials and spatial compositions that carry the emotional nuances of the curatorial narrative."

Lightemotion designs a sensitive lighting that reveals both the architecture and the artworks, guiding perception throughout the journey.

"Light should never dominate the experience; it should reveal, guide, and create emotion," says François Roupinian. "At the Black Gold Museum, the artworks are incredibly diverse, from photography and paintings to monumental installations, making the museum an extraordinary playground for light and perception."



Black Gold Museum, Kriti Arora  
Photo credit: Black Gold Museum



Black Gold Museum, Alvaro Arpa  
Photo credit: Black Gold Museum



Black Gold Museum, Design and Fashion Period Room  
Photo credit: Black Gold Museum



Black Gold Museum, Dream section, Jota Castro, Jimmie Durhan  
Photo credit: Black Gold Museum

La Méduse & Nokinomo extend the experience through immersive digital installations, using technology, moving images, data, and sensory environment in service of emotion and storytelling.

"For the Black Gold Museum, we created entirely bespoke immersive, digital, and interactive installations," notes Anne Jaffrennou. "Each major installation was designed to carry strong narrative content, introducing the different thematic chapters of the museum. The project gave us the opportunity to fully deploy our expertise, guided by one central idea: technology only becomes meaningful when it serves emotion and storytelling."

Anamorphée constructs the visual identity of the museum, embedding meaning into graphic systems that support orientation, rhythm, and narrative clarity. Designing the graphic identity for the Black Gold Museum was a fantastic adventure.

"We created the entire visual language of the museum, including a bold and highly contemporary logo that the client fully embraced in its international ambition."

Together, these approaches merge into a continuous narrative where design becomes a language.

#### From concept to realization - La Méduse

Over six years, La Méduse led the project from concept to completion - initiating the curatorial direction and coordinating the collaboration between designers. Acting as a creative lead, La Méduse ensured coherence across all dimensions of the project, from narrative construction to spatial experience and immersive environments.

The transformation of the building - originally a research library within the KAPSARC campus - was carried out by DaeWha Kang Studio, enabling the development of a fluid and continuous visitor journey across four levels.

#### A new model for contemporary museums

The Black Gold Museum is defined by its immersive approach:

- monumental installations
- interactive digital environments
- subtle interplay of light and matter
- a strong sensory narrative

Interactivity goes beyond traditional digital interfaces or informational displays. It is conceived in a more sensitive and immersive way, engaging visitors through their movement and



Now, Immersive installation  
Photo credit: La Méduse, Nokinomo

perception, to provoke a reaction, an awareness.

At a time when oil remains central to global geopolitical and environmental conversations, the Black Gold Museum proposes a new way of engaging with this material. From the depths of the earth and its darkness to abstract data and future projections, the museum invites visitors to understand and experience oil. It thus becomes a space of discovery and curiosity, rather than a simple place for transmitting information or content.

By bringing together art, design, and storytelling, it reflects a broader

transformation of cultural institutions, where disciplines converge to shape how stories are told - and experienced.

#### Technical sheet

- Black Gold Museum (BGM)
- Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- Museums Commission - Ministry of Culture
- Located within the KAPSARC campus designed by Zaha Hadid Architects

[www.meduse.fr](http://www.meduse.fr)



# Ceramic Innovation Meets High-Rise Design: 302-Metre- Tall Wasl Tower Now Completed

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Photo credit: ©Ahmad Alnaji - SARAB

# Ceramic Innovation Meets High-Rise Design: 302-Metre-Tall Wasl Tower Now Completed

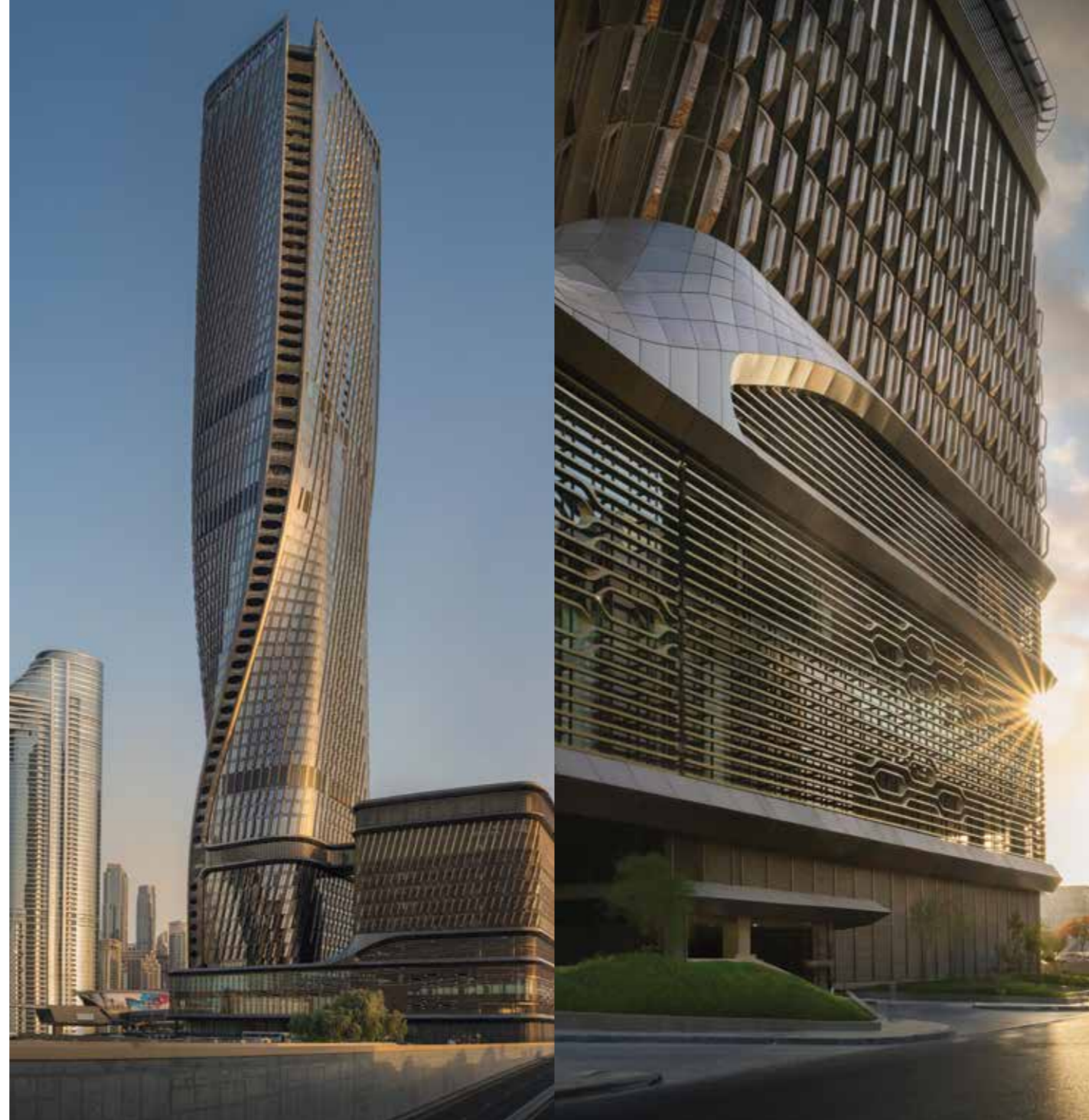
Dubai, United Arab Emirates

**W**asl Tower, located in downtown Dubai and designed by partnership with lead engineering consultant Werner Sobek, has been completed. Since 2013, the teams have worked with Wasl Group to create a high-rise in Dubai that supports the UAE's ambition to be a key player in sustainable transformation worldwide, while contributing to the city's drive for world-renowned architecture over the next 100 years. Today, Wasl Tower stands out within the city skyline as an innovative, adaptable, and sustainable landmark in the heart of the city. The building goes beyond architecture: a bold expression of mobility, sustainability, and possibility.

The Wasl Tower is a 302-metre-tall high-rise structure located off Sheikh Zayed road, rising adjacent to the Burj Khalifa in the heart of Dubai's city centre. Completed in late 2025, Wasl Tower has one of the world's tallest terracotta ceramic facades, setting a regional standard for the use of this timeless material and its inherent sustainable properties.

The Tower's responsiveness and ability to acclimate to harsh climatic conditions by way of passive shading and cooling techniques articulated throughout the façade, set this building apart in the Dubai skyline. The building's form morphs and folds to minimise solar incident heat exposure while maximising the shielding effect of its abrasion and heat-resistant ceramic cloak. The design's dynamic proximity to infrastructure, varying mix of programmatic typologies, and ambition towards sustainability all provided the catalyst for a solution driven design process.

UNS's design concept reflects the building's connection to its unique location, which enjoys access to the metro, pedestrian walkways,



and major roadways. The design adopts a 'contrapposto' movement, allowing the mixed-used tower to face in multiple directions and to offer a constantly changing profile across the city.

Covering 167,733 m<sup>2</sup>, Wasl Tower houses a diverse mixed-use programme that includes the Mandarin Oriental Downtown hotel, residential units, offices, and amenity spaces such as the hotel's multi-story health and wellness centre, and a convention hall for ceremonies, weddings, and conferences, creating a vertical community that caters to a variety of user groups. The design also incorporates elevated public areas, offering unique spaces for socialising, dining, wellness, and chance encounters high above the city.

"The aim was to make a visit to Wasl Tower as attractive and contemporary as possible," says Ben van Berkel, Founder and Principal Architect of UNS. "As such, a dedicated concept of health, comfort, and well-being throughout was developed for the building."

## A transformative façade

With its completion, Wasl Tower now hosts the region's tallest building to feature a ceramic facade, a robust material chosen for its cultural significance and durability. Thousands of ceramic fins provide shading, reduce heat radiation, and capture high winds, adapting to the desert climate while reducing cooling loads by approximately 10% compared to older towers in the city. Ceramics, a traditional material in the region, were reimaged by UNS for high-rise applications, combining low-tech manufacturing methods with advanced design techniques. Its reinvention at scale signals a continuity between material heritage and modern innovation.

The façade operates as a 360-degree system, layered in response to the building's solar orientation. The ceramic fins form a protective cloak that wraps around the tower, acting as a passive environmental filter. Their placement and configuration on the façade, developed through parametric modelling, balance environmental performance with aesthetics. The fins allow daylight to penetrate deep into the interior while shielding incident solar heat gain, supporting both energy efficiency and occupant comfort.

Each composite ceramic fin features a custom terracotta profile, baked with a metallic glaze that enables it to transform visually throughout the day and seasons. As the fins channel wind around the building, integrated aluminum grills enable the airflow to cool the heat absorbed by the ceramic modules, while the cavity between the fins and the tower's interior curtainwall system further supports passive cooling. This dual-purpose envelope combines functionality with expressive design, creating a façade that is both energy efficient and visually striking.

This veil also houses a custom lighting system designed in partnership with Arup Lighting, which is programmed to reflect the ever-changing rhythm of the 24-hour city. Subtle shifts in tone and intensity animate the façade after dark, turning the building into an active participant in the urban landscape. By pairing traditional materials with advanced engineering, the Wasl Tower façade offers a scalable approach that brings design quality, high performance, and environmental responsibility together, setting out a model that can be applied to more sustainable high-rise projects worldwide.

## A walk in the city

Wasl Tower functions not as a stand-alone object, but as an urban node connecting infrastructure, programme, and people.



As the first high-rise of its scale on the west side of Sheikh Zayed Road, Wasl Tower bridges two distinct areas of Dubai: the commercial cluster around Burj Khalifa, and the street-based development of City Walk. As a response to this distinctive location, the design features semi-public zones, shared amenities, and elevated gathering spaces to create opportunities for interaction and engagement. As such, the tower was designed to welcome not only residents, hotel guests, and employees, but also the wider public who can access its seven restaurants and bars.

A central vertical circulation system ensures smooth transitions between programmes, while maintaining operational efficiency and discreetly incorporating back-of-house functions that ensure separation from the public areas of the building. The lift strategy choreographs clear, separate journeys for each programme. Three high-speed express lifts stitch together the four primary lobbies – ground, spa, sky, and rooftop – convening the public programme and the hotel arrival at 150 metres. A shared bank of four office and four guestroom lifts occupy a central shaft, while upper-level residences use a dedicated group with direct basement access; in total, 17 lifts operate throughout, five of them for service. The parking structure also includes a 1,500 m<sup>2</sup> column-free ballroom with a green courtyard that connects directly to the tower via a bridge, enhancing connectivity and creating a cohesive urban experience.

Health, comfort, and operational performance were embedded into the project through a 'Good for the People, Good for the Environment' framework developed by Werner Sobek Green Technologies. The result is a building that supports daily life across different user groups and contributes to the ongoing transformation of Dubai's ground-level urban experience.

**Sustainability, technology, and health to the core**  
The design and construction of Wasl Tower incorporates a range of innovations to improve efficiency and reduce environmental impact. The ceramic fins on the façade reduce solar gain and cooling demand, while solar thermal panels and reflective glazing improve energy efficiency. The tower's lighting is also managed through daylight-responsive systems, and LED lighting reduces perimeter-zone energy use by up to 20%. An integrated heat pump system and district cooling further reduce the carbon footprint.

Materials were selected for their environmental performance, with regionally sourced granite and aluminum, recycled PET acoustic panels, and low-VOC finishes used throughout. Outdoor areas feature passive cooling and planting to create comfortable microclimates.

The Tower's structural system was designed for efficiency and flexibility. Post-tensed floor slabs, hybrid concrete columns, and mechanical-level outriggers enabled an efficient floorplate with minimal internal columns. This approach, which had never been used before in Dubai, resulted in 3,000 cubic metres less concrete used in total. Additionally, health and user-comfort were prioritised, with CO<sub>2</sub>-based ventilation controls, natural daylight access, open floorplates, and clear spatial orientation promoting user wellbeing.

Wasl Tower stands as a testament to UNS's continuous drive for innovation – creating people-centered, high-performance environments in step with the UAE's climate agenda.



#### One-of-a-kind hotel

The Mandarin Oriental Downtown Dubai hotel within Wasl Tower was developed in close collaboration with the hotel operator and GA Design - who were responsible for the interior design concept of the hotel areas. This ensured alignment between the architectural concept and the hotel's specific requirements. As such, the organisation is divided into vertical neighbourhoods, with wellness facilities, dining areas, and event spaces distributed across several levels.

The design supports a clear relationship between public arrival, private services, and shared amenities. Public event spaces, such as meeting rooms and celebration areas, are located on the lower levels and remain fully accessible from the ground floor. These spaces open directly onto the ground floor and landscaped courtyard, ensuring transparency and connectivity.

The hotel lobby, located on Levels 35 to 37, offers a unique arrival experience. Late-evening venues on Levels 61 and 62 provide elevated views of the city, while wellness facilities on Levels 11 and 12 offer a retreat from the urban environment. This spatial arrangement reflects the tower's broader design goals, integrating hospitality with the building's mixed-use programme and embedding a hospitality experience throughout the entire structure.

Reflecting the project's integrated approach to architecture and interior experience, Mandarin Oriental Downtown Dubai was recognised with the Architecture: Hotel award at the 2025 Identity Design Awards, which celebrate excellence in design across the Middle East. dw

#### Technical sheet

- Client: Wasl Group
- Location: Dubai - U.A.E.
- Building surface: 107,539 sq. meters
- Programme: Mixed-use; hotel, residential, offices, meeting centre, ballroom, spa and pools, F&B.
- Height: 302m.
- Status: completed 2025
- Photo credit: ©Ahmad Alnaji - SARAB

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

# Courthouse Building H, Utrecht

by DP6 and i29





# Courthouse Building H, Utrecht

by DP6 and i29

The former secondary school building on the Catharijnesingel in Utrecht has been transformed by DP6, i29 and their design team, commissioned by the Central Government Real Estate Agency. It now houses SSR, the training institute for the Judiciary and the Public Prosecution Service. The stately building has been carefully restored and made more sustainable, allowing its original qualities to shine once again. A new time-layer has also been added, connecting with the existing architecture while aligning with the identity and ambitions of the training institute.

## Rich history and symmetrical layout

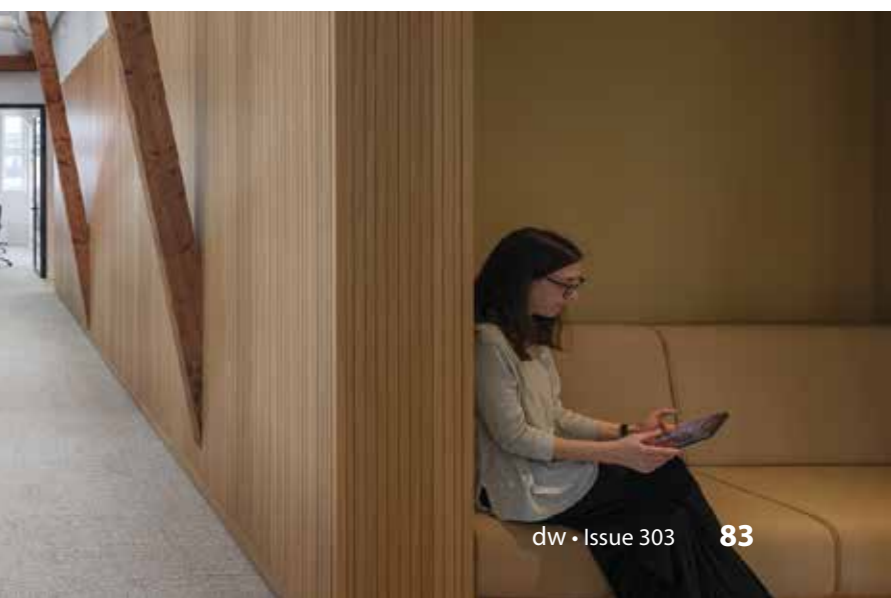
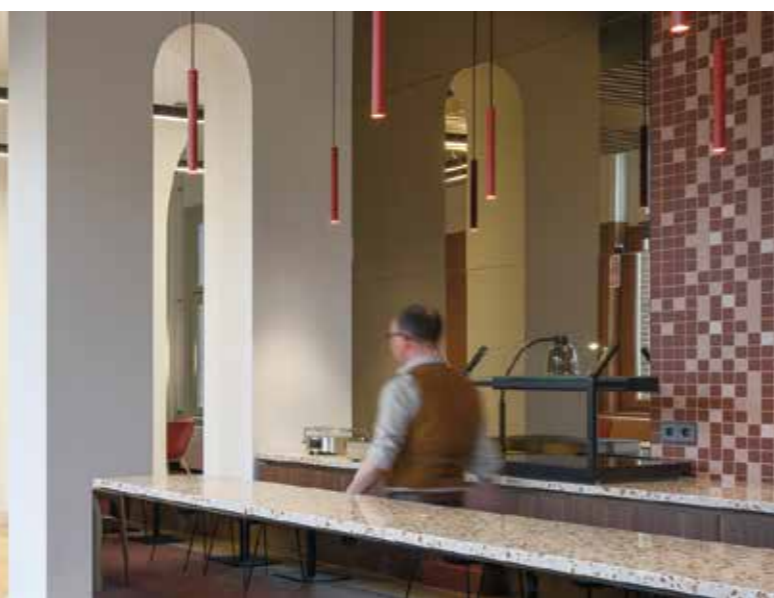
Building H was constructed in 1903 on the Catharijnesingel as a municipal secondary school, designed by architect F. J. Nieuwenhuis. It was a stately building with a symmetrical U shaped floor plan, long sightlines, and a great sense of spaciousness.

Until around 1995, the school building served as an educational building. It was then converted into office space belonging to the newly constructed Utrecht Courthouse, which gave the building its current name: Building H. Continuous corridors were enclosed to create office spaces, sightlines disappeared and suspended ceilings were added. The original entrance and staircase consequently lost much of their function.

## Clear structure restored

DP6 and i29 created a design that brings the clear structure of the historic building to the forefront once again, while adding a new layer that reflects SSR's identity: a familiar, creative and inviting learning and working environment where course participants, teachers and staff feel at home.

Walls added over the decades, fire separations in the entrance hall, suspended ceilings and other clutter have been removed. The clear symmetrical structure, lofty ceilings and stately spatiality of 1903 are once again perceptible, and the craftsmanship in the detailing has been made visible. Strategic openings have been created to add transparency and sightlines, enhancing spatial connectivity and daylight penetration. The green inner garden has also been made accessible from the hall -





an oasis at the heart of the building where the concept of meeting and learning from one another continues outdoors.

#### Balance

The key principle in the design of the new elements is balance: between old and new, between stateliness and homeliness, between round and square forms, between soft and hard materials, between transparency and a sense of security. Balance also refers to the scales of Lady Justice, symbolising the weighing of arguments, evidence and testimonies - and thus the foundation of the judicial system.

Through consistent, carefully considered choices in materials, colour palette and detailing, a unified overall impression has been created - one that radiates high quality. The original terrazzo corridor floors on the ground floor have been restored, and the same vestibule atmosphere has been recreated on the upper floors through a new trowel-finished floor with an elegant lined texture. New dark-steel interior frames contrast with the old, preserving the legibility of the original openings. Soft materials in uniformly designed ceiling islands ensure pleasant acoustics, and new lighting objects connect the various spaces.

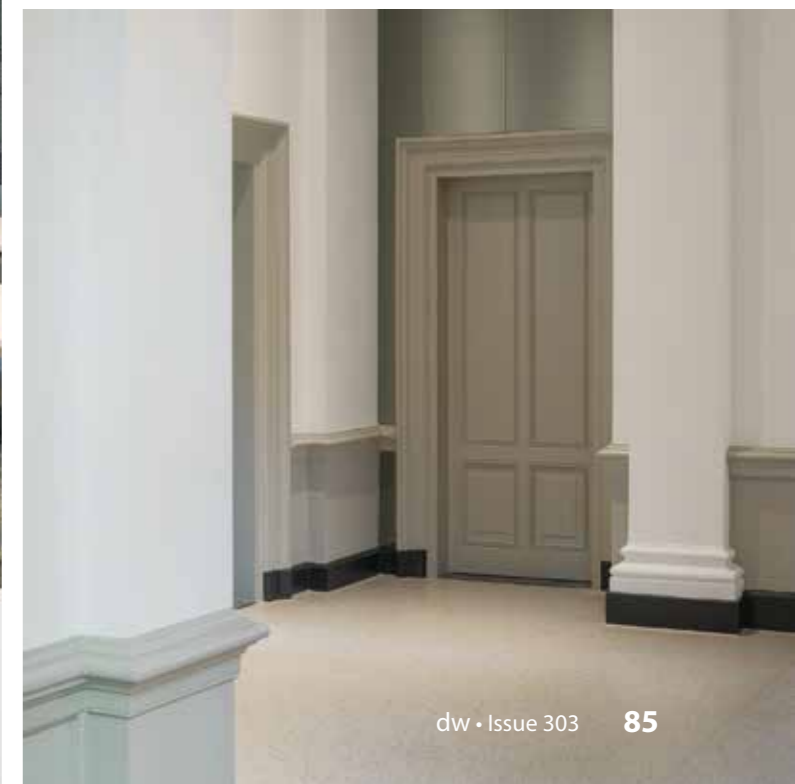
#### Meeting and interaction

Throughout the building, various meeting places have been designed to facilitate interaction and collaboration. Course participants are welcomed in the vestibule, which has been restored to its original state: alongside a prominent service desk, comfortable seating areas offer views of the green inner garden and the monumental staircase. On the first floor, participants and teachers come together in the social hub, which offers a diversity of places to interact, learn, work or relax. The lower two floors contain classrooms and audio-visual studios. The top two floors have been designed as a contemporary, open working environment for SSR.

dw

#### Technical sheet

- Design: DP6 & i29
- Size: 4000 m<sup>2</sup>
- Contractor: J.P. van Eesteren
- Installations: Nelissen ingenieursbureau
- Structural engineer: Pieters Bouwtechniek Delft
- Building cost: HI-plus Bouwadvies
- Restoration expert: Bureau Vlaardingerbroek
- Client: Rijksvastgoedbedrijf
- User: SSR
- Photo's / Video: Stijn Poelstra



# Cloria: The Art of Creating Inspiring Living Environments for Seniors

Beloeil, Canada

cloria



# Cloria: The Art of Creating Inspiring Living Environments for Seniors

Beloil, Canada

What if design could change the way we look at aging? In Beloil, the shared living spaces of the new Cloria residence, designed by Taktik, offer an experience that breaks away from the conventions of senior living environments, encouraging autonomy, freedom, and the desire to live together.

Since the creation of Cloria living environments in 2018, Taktik has been designing the heart of these residences: common spaces conceived to foster connections, extend the feeling of home, and support a new way of experiencing retirement.

In this residence located in Beloil, the layout proposes a coherent framework where private and collective spaces naturally interact, serving daily encounters and exchanges.

"The success of the project lies precisely in the fact that it doesn't feel like entering a retirement residence," explains Alexa Adam, interior designer and project manager at Taktik. "Of course, we ensured ergonomics adapted to the users by avoiding seating that is too low, but above all, we sought to break free from the aesthetic codes usually associated with this type of environment, in favor of a more contemporary and universal language."



From the moment you enter, the gold zinc logo elegantly affirms Cloria's identity. Around it, a bright waiting lounge takes shape, where a signature bench defines the space. The design is thoughtful, with clean lines and light fabrics. Concrete, metal, and pale wood form a restrained, contemporary palette, warmed by comforting textures and colors.

The heart of the project is organised around a landscaped circular hub. The custom circular planter at the centre becomes both a spatial and social anchor. From there, corridors extend in a star-shaped layout, distributing the different areas. This configuration encourages intuitive wayfinding and multiplies opportunities to meet a neighbour, exchange a few words, or be drawn into an activity.

"The common spaces support spontaneous activities," adds Alexa. "Here, residents take charge of community life - there is no programmed calendar of activities organised by the residence."

The billiard room invites friendly games where camaraderie naturally presides. Banquettes and tables lend themselves to lively evenings under lighting that softens the atmosphere. A large wall-mounted library encourages residents to share their reading. The fluted glass partition filters light, preserving intimacy while maintaining a visual connection with the corridor.

The kitchen area, with its sage green cabinetry, is designed for cooking together and allows residents to host their guests. The large stainless steel counter and central island encourage collective meal preparation, turning each recipe into a moment of conviviality. A light wood slatted screen wraps the space and creates separation from circulation areas. A sliding curtain allows the space around the large solid wood table to be adjusted, creating either a more intimate or open atmosphere, depending on the group or occasion.

Across the corridor, a dining nook is organised around a large corner banquette and bistro-style tables. Planters punctuate the space, while a full-height mirror enhances both perspective and brightness.

Finally, the lounge area is undoubtedly the residents' favourite place to unwind. Centred around a gas fireplace, rounded banquettes and armchairs invite contemplation. Vegetal and mineral tones reinforce the sense of calm. It is a cosy retreat, ideal for reading, quiet conversations, or simply enjoying time together.

Two enclosed rooms complete the ensemble: a small room for more focused board game sessions, and a meeting room equipped for presentations and videoconferencing.

"In retirement, people want to enjoy life, stay active, and keep moving - and the space reflects these aspirations: living in an environment that supports activity, autonomy, and sociability," says Nicola Tardif-Bourdages, designer, founder, and president of Taktik Design.

Here, every space has been designed to encourage social life while respecting each individual's pace and well-being. The result is a delicate balance between community and intimacy, supported by custom-designed elements that foster connection and shared experiences.



Suppliers:

- Built-in furniture: Design and fabrication by Taktik Design
- Kitchen millwork: Ébénisterie 3D
- Furniture: Cime, Nuspace, Must Société
- Lighting: Luminaire Authentik
- Mirror: Verre le Futur
- Curtain: Store Urbain
- Banquette cushions: Atelier 30Six
- Canvas artwork: Raoul et Simone

Technical Sheet:

- Official project name: Cloria Beloeil
- Location: Beloeil
- Project completion date: Fall 2024
- Area: 5,020 sq. ft.
- Project managers: Alexa Adam, Zoé B. de Passillé
- Collaborators: Nicola Tardif-Bourdages
- Taktik furniture installers: Sébastien Leclerc and Jean-Luc Simard
- Contractor: Drumco Construction
- Photographer: Maxime Brouillet

dw

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



# designingways



## TAIL OF THE DOG

### Air Show

**O**n a cool sunny winter Sunday, we went to the Airshow at Zwartkops, the South African Air Force Museum near Pretoria. We joined crowds of family groups, mostly sitting in camp chairs along the edge of the airfield. When we arrived a trio of helicopters were showing their moves, one of them noticeable in turquoise Checkers Sixty60 branding.

A team of Harvards with their big nose propellers then droned over the field in perfect unison. These warbirds are World War II 'taildraggers', beautifully restored and maintained, and still used for technical training as well as airshow demonstrations, after being officially retired from active duty in 1995.

Four smaller Chipmunks did another formation routine, showing off their agility with perfect timing and close distance from each other. We missed the race between the Alouette helicopter and the Gautrain, which runs nearby, but did see another race, between a tiny gyrocopter and a Maserati. The gyrocopter is a

small one-man helicopter that can be packed for easy transport, and is used for aerial surveying, anti-poaching and conservation photography. The race seemed pointless, but it gave the petrolheads young and old a thrill. The gyrocopter did a solo routine, showing off its speed and versatility.

A daredevil aerobatic display by a small single-engined plane with a white smoke trail, showing the twists and turns, loops and spirals, was breathtaking. One of the personal touches of the show was that at the end of each display, the planes taxied home past the crowd, and the pilots opened their cockpits or windows and waved at all the people.

The Hawk fighter jet drowned us all with the noise, and the pilot performed a display that had us all holding our breath. He flew huge loops, he flew sideways on both sides, even upside down, all at a phenomenal speed. When he landed, a parachute blew out behind the plane, slowing it down on landing. As he taxied along next to the crowd, his microphone was linked

to the loudspeaker system, and he proposed to his girlfriend who was in the control booth. She said yes and the crowd erupted with delight.

There were Army and Air Force displays next to the hangars, one where a patient officer explained the difference between a tank and an armoured car to a group of small boys, describing them both as 'thick-skinned' vehicles, as opposed to the thin-skinned cars we all drive (tanks have continuous tracks, cars have tyres). The children were also fascinated by the thickly padded long sleeved jackets used by the Army in anti-poaching dog training. The dogs were safely in their cages nearby.

A 1970s Boeing 707 converted to do mid-air refuelling was also on show, an old faithful aircraft still being useful.

It was a fascinating day, put together with enthusiasm for old planes, for flying, and for the role the Army and Air Force have in our lives.

Gill Butler

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## BằNG · Unboring Objects

Shaped by materials, processes, and its workshop environment

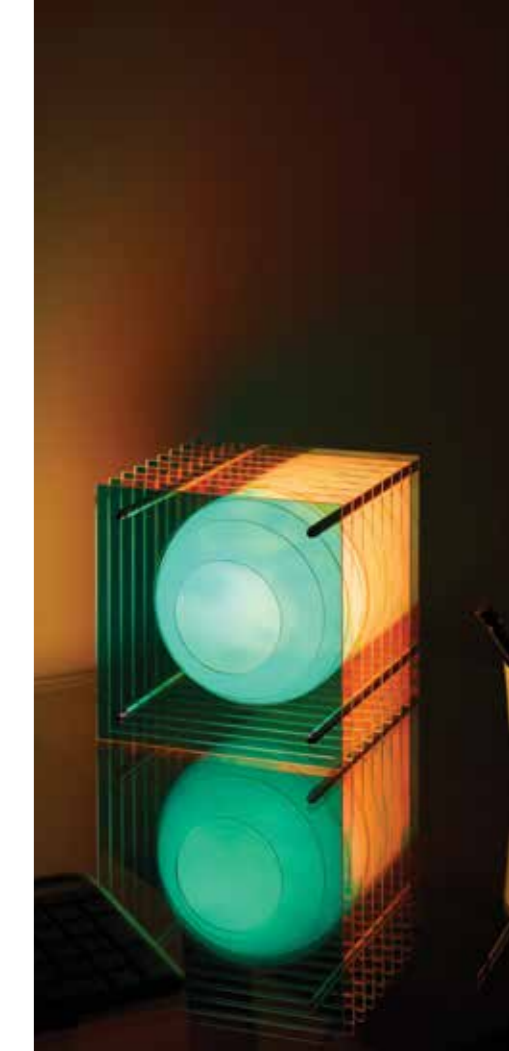
**F**ounded in 2021, BằNG is a Vietnamese furniture and lighting brand, known for its combination of innovative ideas and excellent manufacturing.

The brand is rooted in materials and processes, inspired by its workshop environment. BằNG creates Unboring Objects that awake curiosity and invite interaction, while staying functional and being designed with good sense.

'bằng' is a vietnamese preposition for 'made by' (a process) or 'made from/of' (a material). For example: 'made by hand' is 'làm bằng tay', and 'made of steel' is 'làm bằng sắt'.

### Lớp sculptural lighting

The Lớp sculptural lighting collection embodies a simple idea: a sphere floating amidst layers. When lit, reflections of the sphere materialise on the acrylic layers, evoking images of a sphere in motion. Even though the sphere is stationary, its multiple reflections instill a sense of movement. In Vietnamese, 'lớp' means 'layers'.



Thomas Binh-Minh VINCENT at the studio  
Photo credit: Khoa Nguyen



The latest addition, Dreamy Lớp, introduces iridescent acrylic. The Dreamy Lớp is luminous, shifting in colours, and almost immaterial, constantly changing with light and perspective.

In addition to acrylic, the Lớp collection exists in a stainless steel version, entirely hand polished to a mirror finish. In this version, Lớp presence is monumental, sculptural, and highly reflective, giving the object a more solid and architectural presence.

### Đan catch-all

Đan catch-all is a tray collection designed by Thomas Binh-Minh VINCENT. It explores the relationship between conception and function - how a catch-all can hold the most, while using the least. With Đan catch-all, its simple conception is aligned with its simple function. Drawing its name from the Vietnamese word for 'weave' or 'plait', Đan reflects the brand's focus on materials and processes.

The tray presents itself as a soft, structured volume, formed by two linen bands and slender bamboo sticks. It can be gently reshaped by hand, or even stand on its side as a decorative piece, shifting between forms while maintaining a clear

geometric logic. This flexibility allows the object to adapt to everyday needs, holding keys, coins, or personal items in a form that responds to use, rather than dictating it.

### Qua mirror

Qua is a mirror collection designed by Thomas Binh-Minh Vincent that explores reflection through material and surface. Drawing its name from the Vietnamese word meaning 'through', the Qua mirror is more than a passive object; it's a curious tilt in stainless steel that reflects unexpected details of your space, from a painting behind a desk to a passing cloud through a window.

Crafted from high-grade stainless steel, rather than traditional glass, Qua rethinks what a mirror can be. Replacing fragility with a durable, polished metal surface, it is a mirror that doesn't break. The manufacturing process balances machine precision and handwork. The main sheet is machine-polished to achieve a clean, mirror-like reflection. For the frame, the process shifts to hand finishing - edges are carefully sanded and polished using handheld tools. Machines handle what cannot be done by hand, while handwork brings the sensitivity and control needed



for the final details, which the machine cannot achieve.

### Điểm furniture and accessories

Điểm is BằNG's first furniture and lighting collection designed by Thomas Binh-Minh Vincent. Rooted in the brand's relationship to workshop processes and materials, Điểm explores how a monolithic form can emerge directly from single metal sheets and traditional metalwork techniques. Its matrix-like perforations echo the familiar window pattern created by lighted buildings of Saigon at night.

The collection is built from perforated steel, developed through traditional processes such as cutting, sanding, bending, rolling, and welding. Using the fewest possible metal sheets in the manufacturing process, the objects take on sleek, monolithic forms. The square hole matrix defines the surface - an aesthetic shaped as much by what is removed as by what remains, reducing weight while creating a distinctive visual rhythm.

[www.europe.bangoibanga.com](http://www.europe.bangoibanga.com)



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