

Trend Group and HK Studio collaborate to craft 3,000m² bespoke office oasis

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Leveraging its expertise in office design, Trend Group collaborated with HK Studio, experts in experiential design, to craft a stunning 3,000m² bespoke office in Oxford Parks, Rosebank, catering to an international management consultant.



Source: Supplied.

The new head office embodies the best of interior design, storytelling, and true collaboration to create a space that transcends the expected in office design. It blends corporate functionality with a rich narrative that reflects the essence of the vibrant city of Johannesburg, explains Dorethe Swiegers, operations manager, Trend Group.

From a functional perspective, the client's fast-paced corporate environment necessitated a unique approach. Every element, from open work spaces to closed meeting rooms, was meticulously designed to cater to diverse work modes and the need for confidentiality.

The office layout was devised to accommodate flexible working solutions, aligning with the evolving demands of a hybrid work model.

The project began with a compelling brief: Create an office space that exceeded expectations, making it more than just a place to work. "This was an opportunity to redefine the concept of the modern office in the post-pandemic era, a time marked by uncertainty, where the return to physical workplaces needed a fresh perspective," comments Swiegers.

The design needed to reflect the client's high global standards for an office but, more importantly, needed to change the mindset of staff about returning to the office.

The client conducted extensive analysis to explore new ways of approaching office culture and space. Alongside this, the design team dedicated time to deeply understanding the client's unique corporate structure, culture, and processes.

Through this intensely collaborative process, the design took shape around the following principles:

- **Creating a workspace surpassing conventional office design:** Offering the best possible experience at every level, providing comfort and convenience that would be unmatched by home set-ups.
- **Empathy and authenticity:** Anchoring the design in a greater story that is authentic and uncontrived.
- **Demonstrating value:** A physical and psychological demonstration of the immense value of the staff to the business and bringing a thoughtful approach to every touchpoint in their working environment.

The design narrative took inspiration from Johannesburg's history as a city uniquely founded on ambition, driven by the allure of gold. This juxtaposition of grit and gold, of ambition and reward, became the heart of the design. Johannesburg's cosmopolitan nature and spirit of inclusivity were celebrated, reflecting the city's status as a melting pot.

It is also a city where the exotic is embraced, and often even subtly included in its sense of identity. This is symbolised perfectly by the jacaranda trees seen everywhere across the city for their brief flowering season – exotic yet loved as part of each person's story. This fleeting beauty is infused into various design elements.

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One's journey through the office itself is an unfolding experience, drawing from experience in luxury and retail, and with an emphasis on thoughtful choices. It begins with a deeply sophisticated entry that exudes gravitas, featuring a neutral base palette and mining imagery, embellished with brass details. It anchors the image of the city in one's mind as a landmark, a place of dynamism and hard work.

Unveiling urban narratives

Progressing through the space reveals new aspects of the narrative of the city. Elements of surprise and exoticism are gradually revealed in different ways through various design elements: Wallpaper, furniture, or artwork, creating an unfolding adventure and sense of curiosity. Each space is thoughtfully linked to others as part of this exploration, without for a moment compromising usability and function.

The canteen area is a focal point for the office, and a true showcase of local excellence. From the handmade bespoke furniture to the custom-made Wolkberg wall tiles, each item has been made and placed with care and consideration.

Bruce's Pantry in the canteen area is a drawcard in itself, offering the best of South African food products in an experiential culinary space that elevates the entire canteen concept and gives it a truly local character. The public areas overall strike a careful balance: Inviting and characterful spaces are created through a combination of timeless choices, contemporary style, and subtly playful elements.

To align with international standards and global consistency, certain elements such as desks and carpets were imported. It was, however, particularly important to the project team to incorporate as many local items as possible.



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Artistic fusion

Approximately 80% of the furnishings and fittings are locally sourced and made, crafted with meticulous detail and showcasing the best of African design. Furniture procurement was done through Trend Group's own Design Collab.

The central staircase in the entrance area is a masterpiece in metal and wood with a tree at the centre, symbolising the grit and gold of the city, as well as the fusion of African and global excellence. Similarly, the Houtlander Preservation bench in the adjacent double volume area creates a beautiful and interesting conversation piece.

The design team collaborated with local artists, furniture makers, and galleries to source custom furniture pieces, artworks, and photographic works – most of which were created by Johannesburg-based artists like Justin Dingwall and Seth Pimentel.

The client's new Johannesburg office is an utterly bespoke space, unique to Johannesburg and reflective of the combined identities of the company and the city. The design, born out of thoughtful yet joyful collaboration and research at both the high level and the individual level, celebrates ambition, authenticity, and inclusivity while showcasing African excellence.

“Strong, serious and philosophical, yet with a touch of playfulness, the result is a space that not only meets the practical needs of a corporate environment but also tells a compelling story of Johannesburg's unique identity,” concludes Swiegers.

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