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# VISI

TAMBOERSKLOOF  
HOME,  
PHOTOGRAPHED  
BY RUSSELL SMITH

THE

# DESIGN

THE VISI VISIT  
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# ISSUE

YOU'LL ♥ THESE PLACES

- HIP URBAN PAD • JOZI STARTER HOME
- REFRESHED VICTORIAN • BOTSWANA BOLTHOLE
- BABYLONSTOREN FARMHOUSE • NEWTOWN PRECINCT



# I URBAN

A new development in the **JOBURG CBD** sets out to reimagine the **HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT NEWTOWN DISTRICT.**

**PHOTOS**  
DOOK  
**PRODUCTION**  
ANNEMARIE MEINTJES  
**WORDS**  
TRACY GREENWOOD

01

# REINVENTION



02

# CREATIONS FROM MORE THAN 100 EXCITING AFRICAN BRANDS

located in a historically relevant architecturally designed space are what sets Work Shop New Town apart from more conventional shopping experiences in Johannesburg. So says precinct curator Julian McGowan, co-founder of the design agencies Source and Southern Guild along with his partner Trevyn. "Joburg has always had a fantastic assortment of malls filled with international brands and chain stores," says Julian. "There are also a lot of destination suburbs where the streets are lined with beautiful boutiques. We wanted to offer something different."

Situated on what was once the culturally

and historically significant Market Square, the new precinct is pedestrianised and offers safe underground parking for 2500 cars. There's a mall, a hotel, a gym and Nedbank's offices within the precinct, as well as The Potato Shed, a restaurant and craft brewery in the space that about a century ago served as actual potato sheds for the burgeoning city of Johannesburg.

Multi-award-winning interior architect Maira Koutsoudakis, CEO of the LIFE Group of Companies and co-founder of Life Interiors + Architecture + Strategic Design, says her group aims to be the change they wish to see

in the city. The reinvention of the Newtown area, especially The Potato Shed, and the much-anticipated February launch of the Gentlemen's Arthouse, a heritage molecular mixology bar in the 1911 Edwardian Washrooms a few metres from The Potato Shed, were designed by her practice.

"Excavating culture and revisiting heritage in a contemporary way is what's modern today," says Maira. "Context and location require a celebration of Newtown, the revival of the inner city, a celebration of the icons of the past – the theatre district, Miriam Makeba and the sassiness of the Sophiatown groove – in an edge space that celebrates the city."

Julian shares Maira's excitement about the precinct in general. "The potato sheds were an integral part of Newtown for much of the 1900s. The market was a bustling hub for business and entrepreneurial success. "A century ago, Newtown was the gateway to the city. It was the heart of industry,

with factories, breweries, tanneries and fish markets all making it a commercial hub. It has political relevance, with evictions and uprisings taking place in the area, but is also a place of cultural celebration, a place where poetry, theatre, music and dance have always played a big role. Now, with its rebirth, we are able to continue this legacy of social and commercial exchange."

Julian worked with Adri van Zyl of Atelier Interiors to achieve a contemporary environment that would attract tenants and push boundaries in terms of both display and store identity.

"We wanted to design something ground-breaking, something that hadn't been seen in the country before – something resembling a mix between a market, a design fair and a department store," Julian says. "Adri shares my visual language and she really grasps the dynamics of retail spaces, so she was able to distil my concepts and vision into a workable architectural design."

Newtown, says Julian, is where all the action is right now, and there's a lot to look forward to.

"African fashion is about to enter an era of global recognition, and Work Shop New Town will be the platform for the most relevant and exciting brands to collaborate and share a creative space. Our plan is to continue refining and adding to our assortment of the best African brands we can find." V

- [workshopnewtown.com](http://workshopnewtown.com)
- [newtown.co.za](http://newtown.co.za)
- [source-sa.com](http://source-sa.com)
- [lifeinteriordesign.com](http://lifeinteriordesign.com)
- [lifegrandgroup.com](http://lifegrandgroup.com)
- [atelierinteriors.xyz](http://atelierinteriors.xyz)



If you'd like to go on a tour of WORK SHOP NEW TOWN with VISI, visit [VISI.co.za](http://VISI.co.za) for details or e-mail [events@visi.co.za](mailto:events@visi.co.za).



01

## PREVIOUS SPREAD

01 The new precinct promises a different retail experience to other destination malls.

02 Old-school hand lettering – so symbolic of the spaza stores lining Newtown's streets – aids navigation through the market. The model is Sahil Harilal from Kat van Duinen.

## THIS SPREAD

01 The large entrance, open trusses and bright signage are an open invitation to explore.

02 The scale of the archway and big steel windows drew inspiration from buildings such as The Market Theatre and Turbine Hall to create a modern gallery feel, lending a sense of grandeur and drama.

03 The high dividing walls were removed to expose the original roof. Combined with the use of clean lines and double-volume corner windows, it accentuates the overall design without detracting from the unique elements of each stall.



02

"NEWTOWN IS WHERE ALL THE ACTION IS RIGHT NOW."



03



064

- 01 Interior architect and design entrepreneur behind the burgeoning LIFE Group of Companies Maira Koutsoudakis spearheaded the establishment of six designer eateries and hospitality offerings in the growing group. To her left is her husband and partner John Koutsoudakis and on the far left her design associate Tony Pereira.
- 02 In the eclectic bathrooms, an antique gilded mirror pops against inky teal walls, panelled doors and patterned tile floors. A gleaming brass ice bucket relates back to the artisan brewery.
- 03 A timeworn diamond-buttoned leather sofa in rich caramel rests behind a worker's lamp on a reclaimed industrial swivel table on a deep teal carpet.
- 04 The curing room was designed to celebrate the slow food movement. Biltong is cured and home pickles are marinated, pickled and bottled on site in this rustic oak-barrel-lined space.



02

## THE SPACE ONCE HOUSED **ACTUAL POTATO SHEDS.**



03



04

065



*We love!*

IT IS A CELEBRATION OF THE  
**MENERE AND MAVERICKS**  
 OF OUR TIME.

01 The food and design concept of The Potato Shed centres on food prepared three ways, over firepits, on grills and in the brass-clad wood-burning oven. References are made, both in text on the walls and in The Potato Shed's logo, to the railway that once brought potatoes and other fresh produce to Johannesburg to this 104-year-old building. This was the cue for the design, which focuses on authenticity, provenance and a sense of humour as well as reclamation, recycling and respect for heritage.