

Namib DELIGHT

Thanks to the design expertise of Fox Browne Creative, the quirky character of Swakopmund shines through in the unusual décor of The Delight hotel – doing the hotel's name proud indeed.



PHOTOGRAPHS DOOK PRODUCTION ANNEMARIE MEINTJES TEXT BIBI SLIPPERS



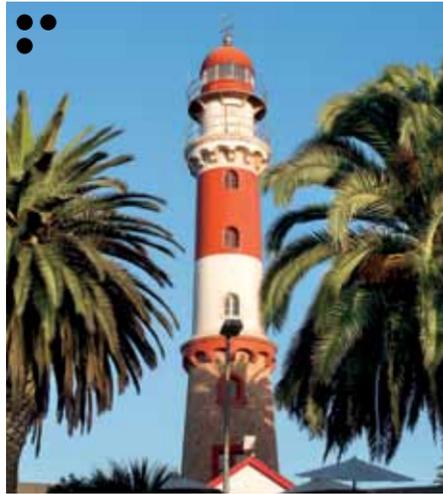
COLOURFUL QUARTERS

Fox Browne envisioned the playful Delight Bar becoming a favourite hangout in Swakopmund. Opposite: The bar area's tiles are echoed in small details in the stairs leading up to the rooms, while the turquoise (suggested colour Plascon Neon Blue, B1-A1-2) is anchored by the neutral timber floor.



IF magic and beauty remain in the world, they can often be found at a point of ungoogleability. For instance, try googling “how to delight”: you’ll be instantly redirected to endless listicles relating to exceeding customer expectations.

While customer service does lie at the heart of Fox Browne Creative’s business – between them Debra Fox and Chris Browne have spent several decades designing and implementing joyous guest experiences at hotels and lodges across the world – they most definitely did not turn to the world’s favourite search engine when asked to



A sense of unity is created by echoing certain elements of the room design in the public spaces within the hotel: clusters of smaller black-and-white photographs bedeck the walls in the dining area and conference room hint at the delightful boldness of the photographic wallpaper in the guest rooms without spoiling the surprise. The photographic theme is continued in scatter cushions on the comfy red couches and in the fabric of armchairs printed with images of thorn trees. The repetition of quirky red accents throughout the interior design is essential in terms of the overall effect. The team also designed the new staff uniforms

“YOU DON’T FIND THE **WARMTH AND HOSPITALITY** YOU FIND HERE IN **AFRICA** ANYWHERE ELSE. IT’S **HEARTFELT**, IT’S **SINCERE**. IT’S **HONEST**. I THINK WE TRY TO TRANSLATE THAT INTO THE DESIGN!”
– CHRIS BROWNE

create a fresh look for the smart basic hotel, The Delight, in Swakopmund. Instead, the inspiration came from the location.

“For us, Swakopmund is a quirky place. It’s very unusual. And that was a good starting point to inject a fresh look into the hotel,” says Chris. The bold colour scheme, centred around turquoise (suggested colour Plascon Neon Blue, B1-A1-2) and red, was inspired by the town’s prominent lighthouse. “The lighthouse is a real beacon in the town, and it provided a flash of inspiration. The red of the lighthouse and the aqua of the Atlantic were the sparks. The lighthouse provided the only bit of cheer in Swakopmund on a grey, misty winter’s day.”

While hotel design is traditionally very conservative and practical, Chris and Debra really wanted to capture the warmth of Namibian hospitality in the design. “You don’t find the warmth and hospitality that you find here in Africa anywhere else in the world,” says Chris. “It’s heartfelt, it’s sincere. Honest. And I think we try to translate that into the design. That it feels like being in someone’s home. The turquoise was really just a rebellion against the incessant grey and to complement the red.”

The Delight forms part of The Gondwana Collection, a group of hotels, lodges and

campsites offering guests the complete Namibian experience. This is a smart basic hotel, offering a unique brand of affordable luxury. According to Chris, the Gondwana team gave Fox Browne Creative free rein within the confines of a modest budget. “Our brief was to create something fun, vibrant and fresh. We always start with the guest in mind and what their needs are and not what looks good on plan. I think the combination of honest materials gives the space a really luxurious feeling.”

Fox Browne created a strong sense of place by using local products and materials. “We’ve tried to make it as African as possible,” says Chris. “All the products in the hotel are manufactured in southern Africa.” Also on display in the design is Chris’s signature sense of humor and fun: in the guest rooms products that embody fun, such as The Sitting Lamp by Graeme Bettles, the bright red SMEG appliances and striped rugs by Karakulia Carpets are grounded by sophisticated modernist lines in other pieces of furniture. Massive black-and-white photos by Megan Dreyer, featuring seagulls, flamingos and other birdlife, printed on wallpaper work beautifully with the turquoise walls, and zig-zag printed curtains suggesting waves situate you on the African coast.

and the food concept to complete the overall experience. They ascribe at least some of their success to the client’s bravery. “They loved the first moodboards immediately. They were really brave and trusted us completely, which set the tone for a very successful working relationship. We really admire The Gondwana Collection’s spirit.”

And what do they like best about the finished result? “I particularly like the concierge desk,” says Chris. “To me it says that it has a sense of place, with that roughness around it . . . and is ready to look after you as a guest. And the bar. The bar might become quite a place to hang out in Swakopmund. I see that whole arrival area as the heart of the building, and that’s where the energy will be. From the minute you step inside, the colour scheme, the feel of the room, takes you into a different space and experience.”

Fox Browne make their achievement sound almost as easy as a Google search: “We’ve set a little stage for the team with a bit of colour and a bit of vibrancy.” While the interior design uses typical features of Swakopmund and the surrounding coastal area as anchors, the overall look and feel is most definitely not typical for the hospitality industry. And that, quite frankly, is delightful.
foxbrowne.com; gondwana-collection.com



Clockwise from above left: The lighthouse is echoed in everything from curtains to furniture; the chandelier by Riaan Chambers forms a striking focal point, combining the appeal of flotsam and jetsam with crystal bling; the seating arrangement around the chandelier echoes a contemporary campfire; the décor is quirky and eclectic: just like Swakopmund.





Unlikely combinations create a sense of unexpected fun: from the wicker basket lined with a bright red plastic bag, the red “riempies” used in the classic wooden chair to the delightful sitting lamp lighting up the desk. Opposite, clockwise from left: Repetition is key: the red ladder in the bathroom is repeated in the bedroom with slight variation; the black-and-white photographic wallpaper adds a touch of magic to the rooms, while the red theme is repeated in the linen and SMEG fridge.



DO TRY THIS AT HOME

Love The Delight hotel's turquoise and red colour scheme? Chris Browne explains how make the duo of shades work in your home.

1. Turquoise should be the lead colour with red as the accessory colour.
2. Make sure that you choose a range of different textures in red and turquoise: shiny, matt, rough, smooth, hard and soft.
3. Both colours work best when combined with a neutral or natural base such as solid timber floors.
4. Try to choose items that have a handmade quality about them to complement the colour scheme.
5. Try and mix in some vintage pieces or items that make you smile!

BASICS MEET LUXE

The Smart Basics concept has caused a small revolution in the hospitality industry. It combines the warmth, friendliness and affordability associated with homestays with the luxury, convenience and professionalism of hotels. Smart Basic hotels are often designed with extremely efficient processes in place, resulting in fewer staff, which keeps costs down. The homely feel and affordability make these hotels relevant competitors in a hospitality industry currently facing major disruption from sharing-economy players such as AirBNB.

The curved breakfast nook is a meeting place of varying textures and colours, and a perfect interpretation of the southern African coastline. Opposite: The dining room is decorated to recreate the feeling of dining in a stylish friend's home. Black-and-white photographs bring the surrounding landscapes inside while wave-print curtains contribute to the relaxed seaside atmosphere.

