

SA'S MOST BEAUTIFUL MAGAZINE

THE
HOLIDAY
ISSUE

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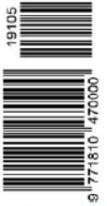
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EXCLUDING TAX



DIABLA OUTDOOR
FURNITURE



Hot+Cool

SUMMER VILLAS, ROOFTOP BARS,
SEASIDE HOTELS
AND SWIMMING POOLS

DESIGN DECONSTRUCTED:
BAUHAUS, THE VESSEL IN NYC,
DOKTER AND MISSES



DESERT PINK

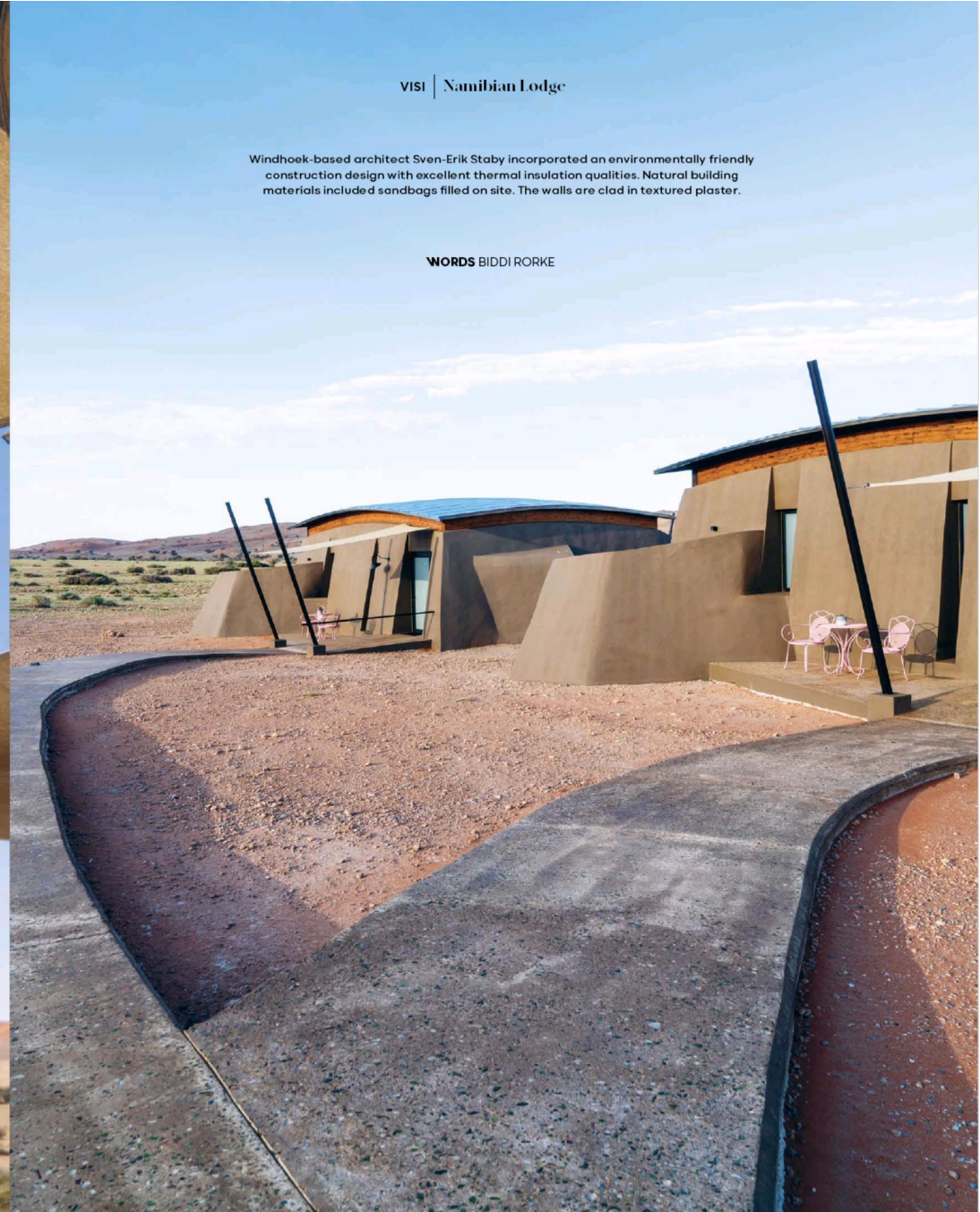
A WEST-FACING **NAMIBIAN LODGE**
SOAKS UP THE BEST VIEWS
OF SUNSET-DRENCHED DUNES
- AND LENDS A TOUCH
OF WHIMSY TO THE BRUTAL LANDSCAPE.

PHOTOS DAVID ROSS

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Windhoek-based architect Sven-Erik Staby incorporated an environmentally friendly construction design with excellent thermal insulation qualities. Natural building materials included sandbags filled on site. The walls are clad in textured plaster.

WORDS BIDDI RORKE





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IT'S LIKE A WES ANDERSON-MEETS-RETRO MIAMI

film set in the heart of the desert: a 24-suite boutique on the border of the Namib Naukluft National Park that's punctuated with unexpected shades of pink. Undeniably cheeky it may be, but Desert Grace – the latest addition to the Gondwana Collection suite of offerings – doesn't scrimp on comfort or ignore eco-sensitivities. Bags filled with Namib desert sand were used to build the exterior walls, while the walkways that snake out from the central entrance/bar/dining hub were created from a mix of concrete and recycled glass. Inside, think terrazzo tiles, neon signs, pink umbrella stands, popcorn, pink drinks and

feathers in varying shades of rose to acid pink. The message is clear: this sliver of Hollywood glamour takes itself seriously when it comes to ensuring guests have a playful desert experience.

"When we were choosing the colour palette, we drew inspiration from the surrounding minerals – such as rose quartz and agate – and the colour of the dunes at sunset," says Chris Browne, co-founder of Fox Browne Creative, who designed the interiors. "The buildings, with their tensile shade cloths, are essentially simple structures, and provided a clean slate for our vision." The bar is definitely the hero of the main buildings, and its backlit stained-glass counters feature animals found in the area, including ostrich, gemsbok and jackal. "At night these counters glow, giving the room a lovely homely feel and encouraging lots of socialising."

To minimise light pollution, the Fox Browne design team relied on very few focused downlighters. "We only have two decorative pendant feature lights in the entire lodge," Chris explains. "However, the retro neon bar sign casts a gentle pink glow across the communal areas, tempting guests to make the most of 'one night in Namibia'." In the generous guest suites, complete with private splash pools, floor-to-ceiling doors celebrate the vibrant vistas beyond. Window dressings mimic lavish stage curtains that guests have to draw closed with a flourish against the night-time desert chill.

Chris says the little tented changing room in the arrival/reception/shop building is the ultimate nod to American film writer-director Wes Anderson, known for his idiosyncratic visual style. "It anchors the room – but it also inspires all sorts of extrovert guest behaviour!" Just a dusty 50km trip away from one of the country's most famous landmarks, Sossusvlei, Desert Grace is a winsome space. As you check in, you're hard-pressed not to check your worldly troubles at the door. Pink gin, anyone?



Oryx skulls from Ikhaya, offset by vintage bric-a-brac, set the tone in the guest reception area and boutique shop. The interior design and implementation was led by designer Sandy Tsou of Fox Browne Creative.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The backlit stained-glass bar counters feature animals indigenous to the region; the angular exterior of the guest suites makes for interesting shadow play in the afternoons; simple, light outdoor furniture does not compete with the desert vistas. OPPOSITE Communal seating areas afford uninterrupted views of the dunes while clashing textures add spirit. The panels above the bar area were custom-designed by Sandy Tsou, and the Scandi-style sofas were created by Houtlander. A central indoor firepit adds warmth on chilly desert evenings.

BAR PHOTO: REGAN DREYER



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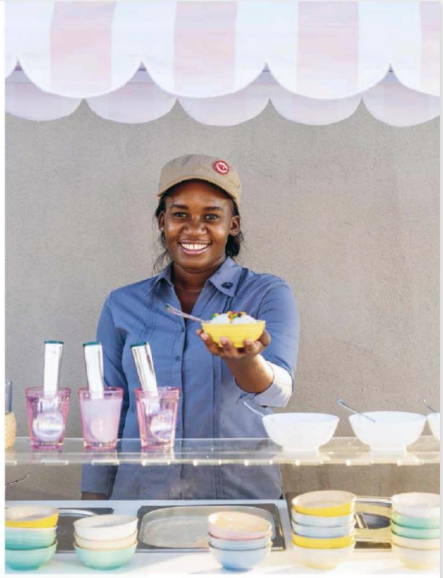
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Flanking the central main building, 20 spacious west-facing double rooms and four family units boast small private splash pools. The curved roofs emulate the undulating dunes.

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The Wes Anderson-inspired tented changing room takes pride of place in the lounge. OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The bar's sitting area features Houtlander sofas and a custom-designed quilted armchair, as well as an Oryx-horn light from Ikhaya; homemade gelato keeps guests cool; custom tables and eclectic smalls make for memorable coffee breaks; pink ostrich feather lamps in the reception area emit a soft glow at night to welcome late arrivals.



WINDOW DRESSINGS MIMIC LAVISH STAGE CURTAINS THAT GUESTS HAVE TO DRAW CLOSED WITH A FLOURISH AGAINST THE NIGHT-TIME DESERT CHILL.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The bathroom tiles from Southern Art Ceramics make a powerful statement against custom basin stands and mirrors; marble on the shower partition adds texture and interest; Walvis Bay photographer Megan OPPOSITE Dreyer was commissioned to take the images that adorn the bedroom walls. Mirrored barn-style doors offer privacy in the en-suite bathrooms, where Robin Sprong wallpaper, reminiscent of old spirographs, covers the bedroom partition.

