



Location: Rosebank, JHB
Size: 15,000m²
Completed: April 2021

Originally the site of FNB in the 1970's, 24 Cradock Avenue is now home to a formidable successor, The Bank. With its vibrant pedestrian and café culture, art galleries, tree-lined avenues and thriving commercial life, Rosebank is a unique combination of Art Deco charm and contemporary metropolitan style. The Bank is a representative of this rich history. The use of local materials to create a landmark that fits into its context was done through the careful use of colour, volume, landscaping and texture. This iconic build was developed by Blend Property Group with architecture by Daffonchio Architects.

The Bank is an exciting new mixed-use development in the hub of Rosebank, Johannesburg and completed in early 2021. It is an approximately 15,000m², 13-storey mixed-use building with three additional floors of basement parking. The structure of the existing 4-storey building was retained and significantly added onto.

The design aesthetic celebrates the history of the original building as a banking institute, whilst ensuring it is well integrated into the rich Art Deco contemporary context of Rosebank. The deep face brick façade creates an impression of strength and resilience, which is softened by the greenery along the façade. By building with custom made rough faced black bricks that were locally manufactured specifically for The Bank, the façade retains its strength and stoicism, whilst giving warmth and charm through texture. The subtle use of brass on the façade, Art Deco inspired steel and balustrade detailing as well soft landscaping and lighting imbue The Bank with a cosmopolitan art-deco vibe.

The brief

Blend Property Group asked Daffonchio Architects to create a new iconic development which incorporated the existing building structure on site, and added 8 storeys onto it to accommodate mixed uses. The building was to be representative of the rich Modern and Art Deco heritage of Rosebank, whilst creating an exciting new destination. The ground floor of the building contains high-end retail stores and a fantastic new restaurant concept; Proud Mary, with an additional bar and eatery on the first-floor terrace.

The building is home to 4 floors of vibrant co-working spaces by Workshop17, with an

additional 2 floors of premium-grade office space on the top 2 floors, with sweeping 360-degree panoramic views of Joburg. The remaining program houses voco, a boutique hotel and the first of its kind in Africa by IHG® Hotels & Resorts. In keeping with the heritage of the site, the tenant that has acquired the top 2 floors is a banking institute.

Interior design

Nkuli Nhleko of Imbewu Design was tasked with creating opulent but functional latitudes for the hotel rooms, concierge and lobby. The Art Deco heritage of the surrounding suburb greatly influenced the dramatic expanses, screens and detailing found throughout the building. The interior design of the hotel aimed to achieve a uniquely contemporary South African feel with a modern patina. Nkuli accomplished this through the use of considered design elements and incredible local products, such as, Wolkberg tiles, Robin Sprong wallpapers, and Douglas and Douglas furnishings amongst others. In a subtle nod to voco's mascots two mosaic tiled birds can be found perched on the bulkheads in the lobby, an owl and a flamingo.

The contemporary cool, luxury rooms executed by Imbewu Design allow light and space to take centre stage, all while ensuring that client comfort is key. Only local artists were commissioned to create unique art pieces for the building, each hand-selected and curated by Art Gazette. There are close to a thousand original artworks throughout the hotel and building, as well as two Eduardo Villa sculptures donated to the public space.

We asked Nkuli Nhleko from Imbewu Design more about the Interior Design process...

Q: What was your brief from the client?

The client's brief called for a vibrant, eclectic, and rich design approach. Inspired by the Hoxton Hotels abroad, they wanted the design narrative and style of the interiors to be an authentic reflection of their location. This narrative was directly informed by the old-world delineation of the Rosebank suburb. The client wanted the atmosphere to be tranquil, a home away from home, to serve as a point of respite from the bustling energy of the surrounding business district.

The concept and narrative that informed the interior design was the harmonious integration between old-world charm and afro-contemporary elegance. The building is a reflection of the Rosebank landscape in the true sense.



PORTFOLIO

Q: As the exterior of the building is so dark, how did you incorporate colour into the interior? How do the two correlate?

The colour palette came together as an amalgamation of our mood boards, the kind of atmosphere we wanted to set and create an oasis within the middle of Rosebank.

The colours we chose are quite uplifting and echo the bustling vitality of the Rosebank CBD; it's a melting pot of ultra-modern developments intermingled with old Art Deco and Neoclassical buildings dotted around Rosebank, and this is a distinctive, complex and unique quality. The intention was for the interior to personify past, present and future Rosebank in all its complexity and richness.

One of the ways we achieved a lighter palette internally that both juxtaposed with and complemented the exterior, was through the application of a wall treatment in the lobby and reception by Earthcote called "Worn Leather", it's a wall wax that imparts a comforting texture, similar to that of an old worn leather couch. Similarly lighting was key to achieving a welcoming air, and softness in contrast to the brick façade. The concierge with its coffered ceilings, tessellated tiles and ribbed amber glass pendants is a chic entryway to the novel, luxury hotel rooms that allow light and space to take centre stage.

Q: The interior is very Art Deco themed, what was your inspiration?

Our design approach was hugely influenced by a beautiful book called 'Hidden Johannesburg' by Paul Duncan and Alan Proust. The book earmarks established homesteads and structures in the greater Johannesburg under the lens of the historical Art Deco and Neoclassical design language. We took the majority of our cues with regards to colour scheme and use of materials from this gem of a book.

Q: From the entrance to the bathroom – the finishes are all so unique – what made you focus on this aspect in the design?

As our client wanted an other-worldly feel to the bathrooms, we felt this was an opportunity to veer away from traditional design and be more explorative and whimsical. We wanted the bathrooms to provide an immersive experience removed from everything happening outside. This led to some unique and 'out there' choices from the beautiful wallpaper to the fanciful fringed detailing on the light fixtures.

Exterior elements

The Bank has been used to further extend the pedestrian access of the Rosebank CBD along the "high street" that runs from the Gautrain on Oxford road, up to Cradock Avenue and along towards the Zone.

Providing a wide pedestrian friendly pavement along the western street facing façade was an important consideration, for both the safety of travellers through this space and also as a way to encourage commuters in the area and surrounds to walk instead. The privatised road has been resurfaced with a cobblestone-styled paving brick instead of the usual asphalt and tar, which softens the roadway and prioritises the pedestrian.

All of the high-end retail spills out directly into this public interface, as well as the integrated coffee shop, which contributes to the public-centric cosmopolitan city culture. To create the envisioned design within the parameters of the complicated existing building, the structure was viewed as an opportunity rather than a hindrance. The minimal design aesthetic, mixed with the strange structural grid, created some very unique spaces in the building. Where possible, major demolitions of the existing building were kept to a minimum.

The new staircase and elevator circulation core was integrated through an existing building atrium. One section of the building did have major demolitions in order to get access to additional natural light. In the rear South-East corner, far away from pedestrians, a large hole through 3 existing floors was cut out. This created a dramatic 4-storey tall courtyard light well. To highlight this space, the existing slab edge beams that were not demolished were used as shelves for cascading landscaping and a local artist, Cameron Platter, was commissioned to cover the 4-storey tall internal walls of the courtyard with a stunning mural.

Key challenges

It was a very constrained site that could only be accessed on one side, with only 2 active edges, both of which are on the periphery of very busy pedestrian routes in the heart of Rosebank. There was also the challenge of incorporating a new iconic design, with a very minimal façade aesthetic, into a complex existing building structural system. We also had to work around the structural limitations of the existing building which included limited parking facilities and restricted development opportunities.

Solutions

The site had to be very carefully co-ordinated with regards to deliveries, storage and management of construction materials on site. The existing basement foundations as well as the top-structure had to be significantly reinforced in order to carry the load of the additional floors. We also worked very closely with the engineers and suppliers to ensure the materials we used in the new build were as lightweight and efficient as possible.





SUPPLIERS:

Steel Fabrication:

A & D General Services – 011 402 7580

Ironmongery:

Ironmongery Warehouse – 011 444 8677

Architectural metal finishes:

Graytex Metals – 011 793 3695

Selected furniture pieces & shopfront feature door handles:

Douglas & Douglas – 082 498 7244

Selected Furniture:

Anatomy Design – 010 594 5397

Rugs & Accessories:

Hertex – 011 025 8483

Planters:

Liebermann Pottery – 011 482 2215

Wall tiles & reception desk tiles (lobby):

Wolkberg – 071 506 4829

Other feature tiles:

Tile Space – 011 796 5100

Floor tiles:

Union Tiles – 011 663 2000

Limegreen Sourcing Solutions – 011 325 2893

Wallpapers:

Robin Sprong – 021 447 9842

Wall finishes:

Earthcote – 021 447 0217

Skylight:

Rainbow Skylights – 011 462 4448

Granite and Marble work (Lobby, reception desk & main bathrooms):

Rock Solid Recreations – 076 344 6333

Black Brick Façade:

Union Bricks – 071 363 7134

Bathroom taps:

Product used: Axor

HVAC System:

Mitsubishi Hybrid VRF System
- 011 830 2080



The existing basement was left as is. Due to the restrictions of the site and the existing building, it was not possible to extend the basement. The entire existing building would have to be demolished in order to lower the foundations.

To resolve this, we re-looked at the entire basement, and through intensive design process, many new parking bays were added, redundant storage and service areas were demolished – and the existing bank vault hidden in the basement mezzanine was even involved. This created a space large enough to house an additional 10 parking bays. Finally, we added a series of car lifts which allow one car to be stacked on top of another. Through this process we significantly increased the amount of parking bays in the existing basement. The entire basement will be managed by an experienced valet service that will coordinate the car lifts on a daily basis for all patrons.

Project innovations

Environmental perspective:

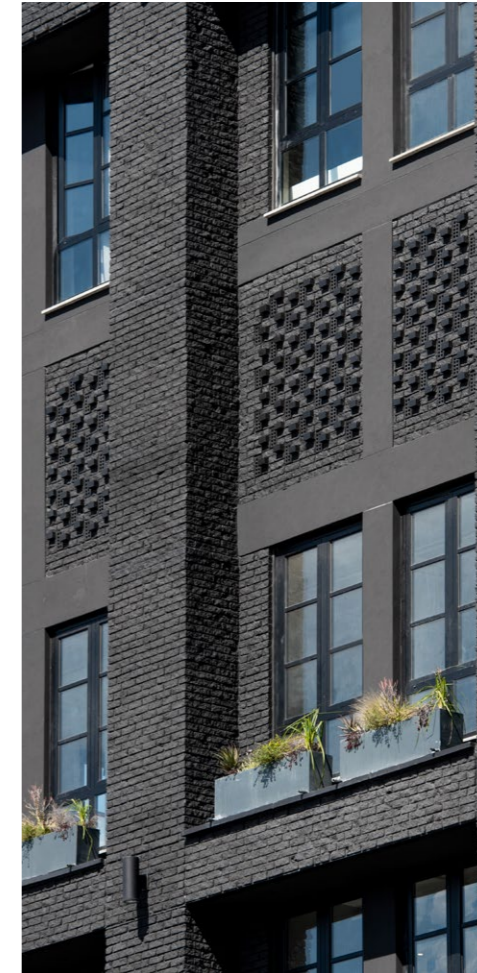
The building's overall bulk was upgraded by more than three times, however, no upgrade to the existing municipal power supply was done. The area of Rosebank has an already constrained electrical grid and upgrading the supply would have incurred significant costs. Instead, the project team elected to utilise those costs to implement much more sustainable solutions. The electrical shortfall was supplemented by the use of multiple interventions:

- A high yield photovoltaic array was installed on the roof. The power generated by the 259 PV panels provides approximately 100,000kWh per annum, equating to about 10% of the building's total requirements.
- Making use of the existing Egoli gas supply that feeds the site, a large gas generator was installed. This generator was designed as a critical component in a Co-Generation system that supplies the building with a significant amount of electricity. As the generator is essentially an internal combustion engine, a massive amount of waste heat is generated as a by-product. This heat was captured through a heat exchange system and stored in large water tanks. These tanks provide free hot water for the entire building without any geysers or additional utility costs. The co-gen system provides an approximate R1.1million saving per annum.



MEET THE TEAM:

- Client:** Blend Property Group
- Architects:** Daffonchio Architects
- Structural Engineer:** JRMA Consulting
- Mechanical Engineer:** VMG Consulting
- Electrical Engineer:** SOLelec
- Wet Services Engineer:** MG Building Services
- Fire Engineer:** Building Code Consultants
- Main Contractor:** Gothic Construction
- Quantity Surveyor:** DMS QS
- Project Managers:** Davidoff Project Managers
- Interior Designers:** Imbewu Design
- Landscape Designer:** Grace's Glory
- All glass & aluminium work:** Alunite
- PV Panels & Co-generation System:** Blackdot Energy
- HVAC installations:** Tempkor
- Drywalling & Ceilings:** Titan Ceilings & Partitions
- IT, Electronics & Access Control Infrastructure:** 3G Consulting, Infra Base & Systems Africa
- Painting contractors:** First Class Projects
- Shop Fittings:** The Innovation Factory, Joinery Worx, Timber Innovations
- Images:** Juane Venter Photography



Other environmental considerations:

The HVAC system that has been utilised is one of the most energy efficient, state of the art systems available and is linked to a smart management system that will constantly monitor the internal zone temperatures and make changes to ensure no energy is lost and that no unoccupied areas of the building are being chilled or heated unnecessarily.

All the glazing for the building is to an extremely high spec, to ensure there is minimal heat gain through the façade. The Bank utilises double glazed, low-e coated glazing panels with argon gas filled air cavities, seated inside double sealed, thermal break aluminium frames. Motorised sliding shutters with precisely angled shading blades have been installed to block out the intense western afternoon sun, whilst still providing for incredible sweeping views to the north. All landscaping for the building has been specified as water wise and fully indigenous. No irrigation is required.

By increasing the pedestrianisation and green plantings, the path is laid for new developments in the Rosebank CBD and surrounds to build a healthier urban environment. Climate change and its influence on health and well-being pose increasing challenges for cities with heat stress and carbon emission higher in urban than in rural settings.

Architecture

Principle architect Enrico Daffonchio explains that the building has revitalised a site that was "for all intents and purposes, dead. So much so that the landlord across the piazza had built a wall to hide it from view. It reactivated this part of Rosebank and its surrounds. Our consideration in the design was to bring back in a contemporary key some of the Art Deco language. There has been a major revamp of the public space not only of the site itself".

It is unusual in Johannesburg that a developer would give generously to the concourse surrounding a project, more typically they'd close off the building with parking on the ground floor, whereas here not only is there a great activation of the retail area within the building facing the pavement, but also a big investment in upgrading the road, rehabilitating the trees, creating an Uber lane, relooking at the traffic flow and how one could connect this building with the surrounding buildings that were very separated before.

Technically this was an incredibly difficult project because we retained the structure and built around and on top of it, rather than demolishing. So the engineering of this project was extremely complex, the energy aspect was also challenging because we didn't have enough reliable power available to the site and had to come up with innovative solutions.

While it is an outstanding principal from a sustainability perspective that the building is mixed-use; housing, co-working offices, a hotel, restaurants and so on, because half of the building is countercyclical with the other half, it adds another level of complexity in integrating all of these different functions.

We asked Daffonchio Architects more about this stunning build...

Q: Why did you choose black brick for the façade?

"We love dark buildings, especially when designing in the Highveld because of the very strong light characteristic of this ecoregion, so we've got to make buildings that become soft visually by being dark and not reflecting very harsh light. A lot of our buildings are like that, particularly for the Bank, we were looking for that direction and colour, but also for a low maintenance material, so we started examining the black brick option and found a supplier, Union Bricks. They produced a black brick, and created a mould especially for it that would form a very particular rough texture on the façade, so that notwithstanding the dark colour, one could still appreciate the texture with the play of shades and light.

The bricks are made in one mould with four bricks, and when they are split apart the cracking is random. Therefore there are no two bricks that would have the same look and feel. We later touched up the façade with sealants and darkening agents to create the richness and depth of colour.

Q: Furthermore, why did you position lighting on its façade?

Robert Dos Santos, lead architect says that due to the building's iconic and central location in the Rosebank shopping district, we wanted to ensure that the building had great visibility throughout all hours of the day. Due to the mixed-use programme of The Bank, there are some elements that will be very active during the night-time hours, such as the restaurant, bar and the hotel. This meant that it was very important to ensure that the building felt accommodating, warm and inviting both during the day and at night.

The façade has such a dynamic and striking relationship to light, due to its colour, texture and deep recesses. The lighting ensures that this relationship is carried through into the night as well. The lighting does wonders in highlighting the beautiful rough faced brickwork. The lighting also assists to highlight the focal crown of the design. During the day, the overhanging boxes of the top floors cast very deep shadows and creates a very strong visual language. During the night this is flipped around by illuminating the underside of these boxes, which enhances their 'floating' nature and draws one's eyes up to the crown of the building.

