

BOUTIQUE OFFICE DEVELOPMENT

in the heart of Sandton

Photographs by Mike Pawley

Number 4 Stan Road in the heart of Sandton is the original and the new home of MDS Architecture, a South African practice with a history spanning over 60 years. The new eight storey building has a unique sculpted street presence and manages to provide a sense of sanctuary and privacy despite its location amid imposing neighbouring structures. It also boasts both a 4-Star Design and a 4-Star As-Built Green Star Rating from the Green Building Council of South Africa.



MDS Architecture designed the office building for a consortium of professionals, made up of some of the partners in the practice as well as those of their long-standing office neighbours, Brian Heineberg & Associates. The original building was developed in 1991.

Sean Pearce, a partner at MDS Architecture, created the concept for the building and Pat Henry, also a partner, led the design development and construction of the project. Pearce explains that the site's context was an important consideration in developing the design. The site is bordered by complexes of residential towers on three sides, with a large office development between it and the very busy Grayston Drive. Its street address on Stan Road faces west, which created an interesting design problem for resolution.

The original single-storey building at 4 Stan Road was the home of MDS Architecture and Brian Heineberg & Associates for many years and they have proudly returned to this address as the anchor tenants in the new building. "Designing a building for both architects and quantity surveyors who are also your partners and co-owners makes for a very interesting project," says Henry.

"The original single level structure that made way for this exciting new building was being dwarfed by massive developments as this part of Sandton grew. For us, the site holds so much history and while wanting to pay homage to our roots we also wanted to ensure that the new building reflected the future of both practices as well as that of the burgeoning greater Sandton precinct," he explains.

Two distinct aspects

The building has two distinct aspects. The street address façade on Stan Road is west-

facing and is treated as a solid face with massive full height fins behind which thin slivers of glazing peep southwards over the roofscapes of Sandton. In this way the design manages the typical heat build-up of a west-facing façade and controls the associated glare issues. It also provides a sense of privacy and intrigue for the occupants.

The north-facing façade is fully glazed. It opens up the office spaces to the views across Bryanston towards the Magaliesberg as well as looking onto a private landscaped courtyard on the fourth level.

The entrance to the building slices vertically into the solid west street façade, creating a unique permeable street address with reception facilities at street level.

The entrance is distinguished from the other buildings with lush green landscaping contrasting with the angled and sculptured forms of the building. The slope of the street led to the contrasting angles in the façade. At night, vertical illuminated shafts between each pair of trees mirrors the concealed vertical illumination between each of the façade's fins, further creating a dramatic presence in the street.

Sky deck as sanctuary

In order to meet the owner's brief for above-ground parking as opposed to excavated basement parking, the architects created a podium with a generous landscaped sky deck onto which the offices open. This level has been designed as a useable sanctuary for the occupants to break away from their work. It has large-scale indigenous trees providing shade with under planting that will attract birdlife to the area. The deck is made up of areas of timber decking and imitation lawn with tables and chairs under umbrellas and a bar area for entertaining purposes. The

area enables the office building to stand back from the boundaries and creates a pleasant green space at high level in between all the other neighbouring buildings.

The floor plates of the offices are in a loosely triangular shape, providing north-light and avoiding the sense of being crowded in by the surrounding buildings. "The podium and deck is at the same level as those of the surrounding buildings but it has privacy due to the treed green berm created around it, you are not aware of other people using their decks," explains Pearce.

Materials and aesthetic

The use of dark full height performance glazing on the northern façades ensures a modern, timeless expression complemented by large scale white porcelain clad fins adding vertical interest to the building and giving it a simplified black and white aesthetic. The podium is dark and clad with recycled security grilles from the original building. These grilles have been fitted with planters at each floor level so that in time they will be covered with soft green creepers giving the podium the appearance of a large clipped hedge. The creepers have been chosen to have a flush of seasonal white flowers and the reuse of the grilles have added to the Green Star submission.

MDS Architecture has chosen an open-plan office layout with a restrained industrial design studio aesthetic that contrasts with the slick and glossy finishes on the exterior of the building. The colours are generally also black and white with painted rather than plastered brick, exposed concrete and warmed with natural timbers. The light fittings have been purpose made and or chosen to reflect this aesthetic.

An internal pause area featuring book

lined shelves, a large screen TV and multi coloured bean bags is linked to the kitchen area with a huge wooden island table that doubles up as a place for lunch as well as informal meetings.

The gallery linking the reception area to the staff entrance and toilets has been treated with a graphic bespoke wall covering that makes abstract references to MDS Architecture's many iconic projects built over the years.

The toilet facilities have been treated very differently to the run-of-the-mill toilets found in office buildings in that the wall surfaces are either clad full height with black glass or a textured black wall covering, contrasting with white porcelain sanitary ware and white stone vanities. The ceilings are also painted black. The WC cubicles are clad externally with warm French oak timber and internally with high gloss white ceramic tiles; all in all creating a dramatic experience for the users.

Each office floor has been treated in such a way that each tenant can create their own experience and brand from the moment their visitors alight from the lifts.

Parking

Parking is provided in excess of the minimum statutory requirement for offices; the parking areas are all above ground and naturally ventilated and illuminated. The new town planning requirements for the precinct dictate that no off-street parking may be provided for new developments and in order to comply, all the visitors bays have been provided on the ground floor behind secure access and control. These parking bays link directly into the building's reception area as well as the pedestrian entrance for visitors using the Gautrain or taxis.

Professional team

- **Client:** Sharmane Investments
- **Architect:** MDS Architecture
- **Quantity surveyor:** Brian Heineberg & Associates
- **Structural engineer:** L&S Consulting Engineers
- **Electrical engineer:** CKR Consulting Engineers
- **Air-conditioning:** Spoomaker & Partners
- **Green consultant:** Green By Design
- **Fire consultant:** Specialised Fire Technology
- **Landscape architect:** Bertha Wium Landscape Development
- **Main contractor:** Tiber Bonvec



Sustainable building features

While the re-use of certain elements from the original building has contributed to 4 Stan Road's sustainability rating, it is also provided with all the energy efficient and building management systems including sub-metering of both water and energy necessary to achieve its 4 star Green Star rating from the Green Building Council of South Africa.

The system chosen for air-conditioning and ventilation is a decentralised variable air volume (VAV) system with a highly efficient air cooled chilled water plant on the roof. It is energy efficient, sustainable and flexible and provides the indoor air comfort and quality required to comply with the Green Star rating of the building.

Cycling facilities have been provided for both building occupants and visitors. Secure bicycle storage spaces, lockers and showers have been designed with easy access to the building's reception area.

The Green Building Council of South Africa has awarded both a 4-Star Design and a 4-Star As-Built Green Star rating for the building after only Round One submissions; these Green Star plaques are proudly displayed in the building's reception.

Into the future

4 Stan Road is a boutique office building that features thoughtful and practical modern design. It is a fitting testimony to the unique blend of creativity and pragmatism for which MDS Architecture is known. In addition, it pays tribute to a rich history while looking confidently forward to the future. <