

PROJECTS



HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS SANDTON WOODMEAD

Sandton

Client & Developer

ISO Leisure

Development Managers

Zenprop

Project Managers

Proman Project Management Services

Architects

Louis Karol

Quantity Surveyors

MLC Quantity Surveyors

Consulting Engineers:

Structural & Civil

Sotiralis Consulting

Electrical

Solution Station

Mechanical

Elshove & Pryce

Plumbing

Gemi Consultants

Fire

Bramley & Associates

Health & Safety

C & L Risk Management

Landscape Architects

Insite

Town Planners

GE Town Planning Consultancy

Hotel Procurement

Hospitality Procurements

Main Contractor

Adamson Nielsen Construction

Text

Robert Silke,
Louis Karol Architecture & Interiors

Photography

Mike Wesson

Holiday Inn Express Sandton Woodmead

Forging an architectural identity for the global chain that is unique to South Africa, the architects are creating a mix of urban and suburban hotels that involve the recycling of existing downtown office and apartment blocks and the creation of entirely new structures.

This multi-hotel project is regarded as unprecedented in terms of scale and speed of development by any hospitality group operating locally. It will see the opening of no less than ten hotels countrywide by 2010. Holiday Inn Express Sandton Woodmead already has a 95% occupancy, both in and out of season.

General

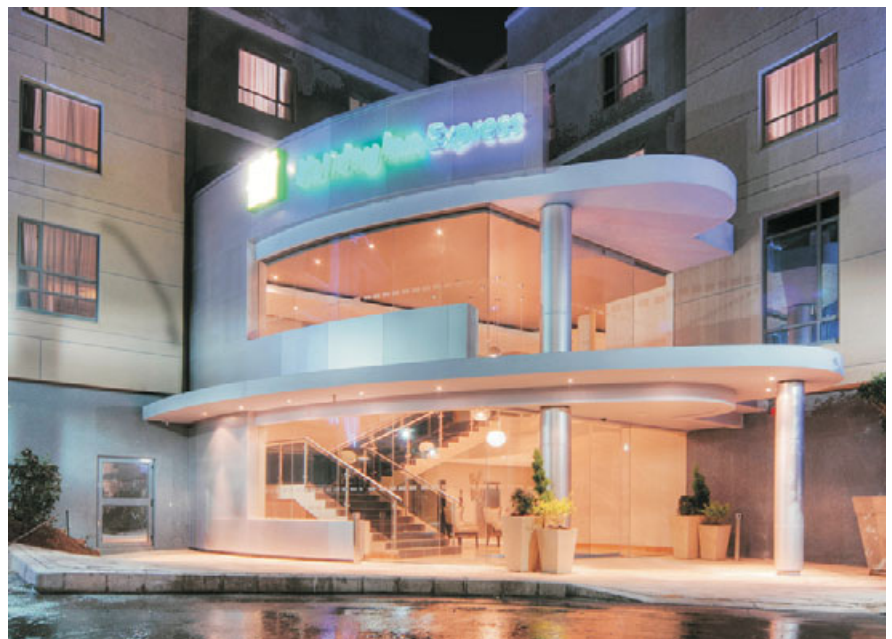
Andy Warhol wrote that "America started the tradition where the richest consumers buy essentially the same things as the poorest... The President drinks Coke, Liz Taylor drinks Coke, and just think, you can drink Coke, too. A Coke is a Coke and no amount of money can get you a better Coke... All the Cokes are the same and all the Cokes are good..."

The same could arguably be said of Holiday Inn, since limited service hotels are social condensers, frequented by people from all walks of life - and for different pursuits. But, global standardisation isn't always successful and architecture

demands a considerably higher level of regional adaptation than soft drink.

In contrast to the tired image of the traditional old South African mid-range hotels, Holiday Inn Expresses are (almost by definition) entirely new or newly refurbished, with luxury finishes and fully-featured rooms. Holiday Inn Express passes on savings to its guests by the omission of full-service restaurants or room service. Although a breakfast buffet is served daily, Expresses are generally situated close to busy restaurants and service nodes - an acknowledgement that it has become virtually anachronistic to dine in one's own hotel. Unpopular hotel restaurants are now often redundant and are effectively subsidised by guests as part of the room rate in a traditional hotel.

South Africa's first new Holiday Inn Express opened in Cape Town's booming and revitalised city centre in March 2008. Holiday Inn Express Cape Town City Centre is now followed by Holiday Inn Express Sandton Woodmead (which opened in July)





and Holiday Inn Express Pretoria Sunnyside opening in mid-2009. ISO Leisure CEO, Gavin Watson, is committed to constructing 2010 rooms by the year 2010, and to this end further Expresses are on the drawing boards for Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban and other large and emerging cities.

Architecture

Forging an architectural identity for the global chain that is unique to South Africa, the architects are creating a mix of urban and suburban hotels that involve the recycling of existing downtown office and apartment blocks and the creation of entirely new structures. These are being designed to make accommodation more accessible to South African business and leisure travellers, while drawing greater numbers of visitors from the rest of the continent and further afield.

The franchise demands implementation of international brand standards (down to the artwork, which is intended to hang

above all 2 million-or-so beds around the world), but a study of Express properties in Europe (from Slough to Stuttgart) painted a bleak picture. Any notion of the dream of the highway and the roadside hotel was shattered by the precedent study.

Louis Karol's Architectural and Interiors divisions set about creating a new South African brand identity for Holiday Inn Express. "It's the rarest architectural opportunity, to roll-out every South African hotel for an international chain", said Robert Silke, design partner at Louis Karol Architectural. "Whilst Holiday Inn Express rooms are set to exacting international brand standards, we have had considerable freedom in determining the architectural character of the hotels, their external interface and their public areas", Silke continued.

Owing to land prices and availability, new Expresses inside major city centres tend to be conversions of existing buildings on brownfield sites, whilst new-builds tend to occur on greenfield sites alongside major

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The public areas comprise a breakfast room and bar area, with meeting rooms, reception and a large wooden deck



arterials or in new or suburban areas. "To this end we have created a prototypical brand architecture for all South African new-builds, with the intention of creating an easily-recognisable and uniquely South African identity for the hotels", Silke explained.

Holiday Inn Express Sandton Woodmead

Holiday Inn Express Sandton Woodmead (the chain's first new-build, which opened in July) is a prominent roadside building that, from some angles, resembles a bullet train, with a dramatic, silver-aluminium-clad signature balcony feature at the 'engine' of the hotel, with carefully articulated room modules trailing behind like slick, modern, luxury train compartments. The futuristic architectural branding will be carried through to other new-builds across the country, with regional variations in respect of materials, colour and climatic control.

The Woodmead hotel is situated on a major intersection and is bounded by the N1 (Ben Schoeman) highway and Maxwell Drive - which is reportedly Africa's second busiest intersection - opposite the Vodacom driving range, and adjacent to several new major corporate headquarters

for Oracle, Group 5 and General Motors: Holiday Inn territory.

However, the motel form of a hut in a sea of parking has been abandoned - opting for a U-shape with defensible entrance court and hovering on pilotis to increase highway visibility, creating covered parking, and lining the public edge. The hotel numbers 157 rooms across three levels, amounting to $\pm 4,800\text{m}^2$ built area, with naturally-ventilated parking basement measuring $\pm 2,200\text{m}^2$, and amounting to a construction cost of $\pm \text{R}60\text{m}$.

The U-shaped plan arranges its double-banked rooms around a central entrance courtyard with on-grade parking, and access to a semi-basement offering covered parking. The public areas comprise a Great Room (breakfast room) and bar area, with meeting rooms, reception and a large wooden deck - all with spectacular views over the adjacent golf course. Rooms are constructed in conventional clay masonry on a concrete frame structure, two-to-a-bay on a 7.5m parking grid, so as to avoid any structural offsetting, while major wet vertical services are diverted away and insulated over the public areas. An outsourced restaurant on-site will serve





The rooms are designed according to international Holiday Inn Express hallmarks

the immediate precinct and be open until late. The rooms are designed according to international Holiday Inn Express hallmarks, but one would be forgiven for thinking that the new South African Express guest rooms and bathrooms are a little more spacious than experienced overseas - because they are.

There being one architect and one operator for southern Africa, the team could lobby for regional variations, which have been implemented at Woodmead - from larger rooms and showers to upgraded specifications. ISO Leisure is an enlightened client, abandoning the practice of deliberately dumbing down three-star hotels with kindergarten interiors and has given back to the building - about as much as they can afford.

"While many three-star hotels are designed as invisible, modest boxes - almost ashamed of themselves - with big signage, it is our intention is to create buildings so striking and familiar, that you wouldn't even need a sign to tell you that you've arrived at an Express hotel," said Silke.

To this end, the architecture endeavours to interpret the values behind the hotel brand: "Express' speaks of modernity and

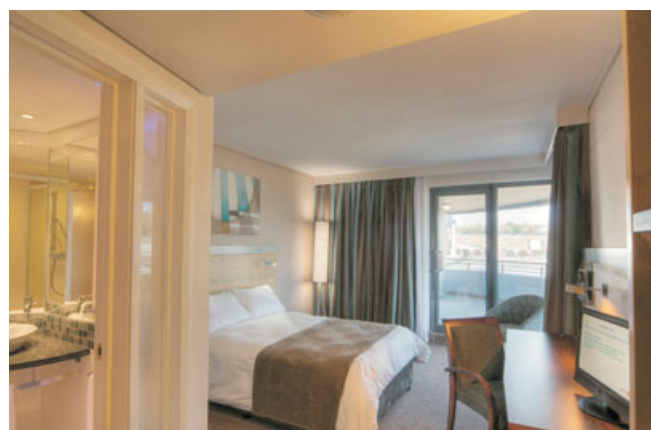
speed, of the romance of high-speed transport and a kind of smart simplicity," explained Silke.

An immediately recognisable, prototypical architecture of signage has been pursued, that would capture the romance of the highway and high-speed transport implied by the name 'Express' - one that invites repetition in other cities. To this end, the hotel resembles the lovechild born of a Gautrain engine and a 1950's Airstream - both of which are forgiven for looking the same, regardless of what city they are in.

Interior Design & Dècor

Fixed interiors items were designed by Louis Karol Interiors, with dècor, furniture and softs by Marelize Watson Interiors. According to Jessica White, interiors partner at Louis Karol, the notion of guest comfort is reinforced the moment one steps into the reception area. The design approach does not take its cue from the limited service that the hotel provides - and has ended up more 'boutique' than 'budget'.

The public areas are designed as a social condenser, concentrating human interaction, with reception, bar, vending machines, internet stations, restrooms and



The futuristic architectural branding will be carried through to other new-builds across the country



lifts all in closest possible proximity to one another.

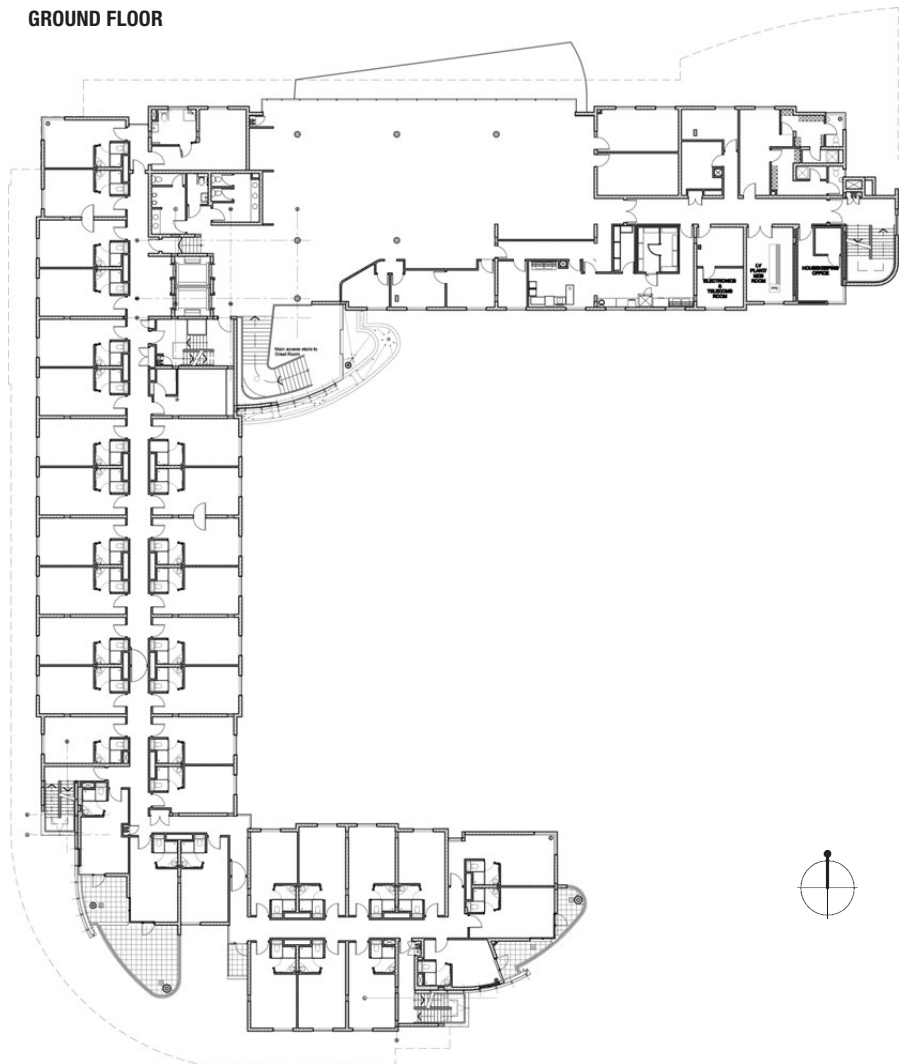
A luxurious, contemporary interior, with a slight retro edge, has been created to ensure that a sophisticated air of comfort is conveyed.

Whereas White asserts that many three-star hotels in South Africa are deliberately decorated with cheap fabrics, garish colours and bad wood-stain, she has rather opted for muted hues, natural stones, light timbers and large scale, abstracted, sepia photography (usually reserved for four and five-star hotels) “to ensure the space does not slip into the typical budget hotel genre”.

Marlize Watson has jettisoned the coarse primary colours usually associated with 3-star hotels in favour of muted stone colours, duck egg blues, golds and silvers. Similarly, the rooms, although designed to specific international standards, are finished with luxurious, although durable, finishes and fabrics. Paint colours and lighting levels to the corridors have been specifically chosen to ensure that the circulation space creates the same luxurious atmosphere as the balance of the hotel.

This design thread will remain common to all the hotels, with accent colours and the artwork subject matter changing to suit the specific hotel location. “Exceptional

GROUND FLOOR





service and stylish design ensures an amazing hotel environment in which one can meet, greet, conduct business or simply relax”, White concluded.

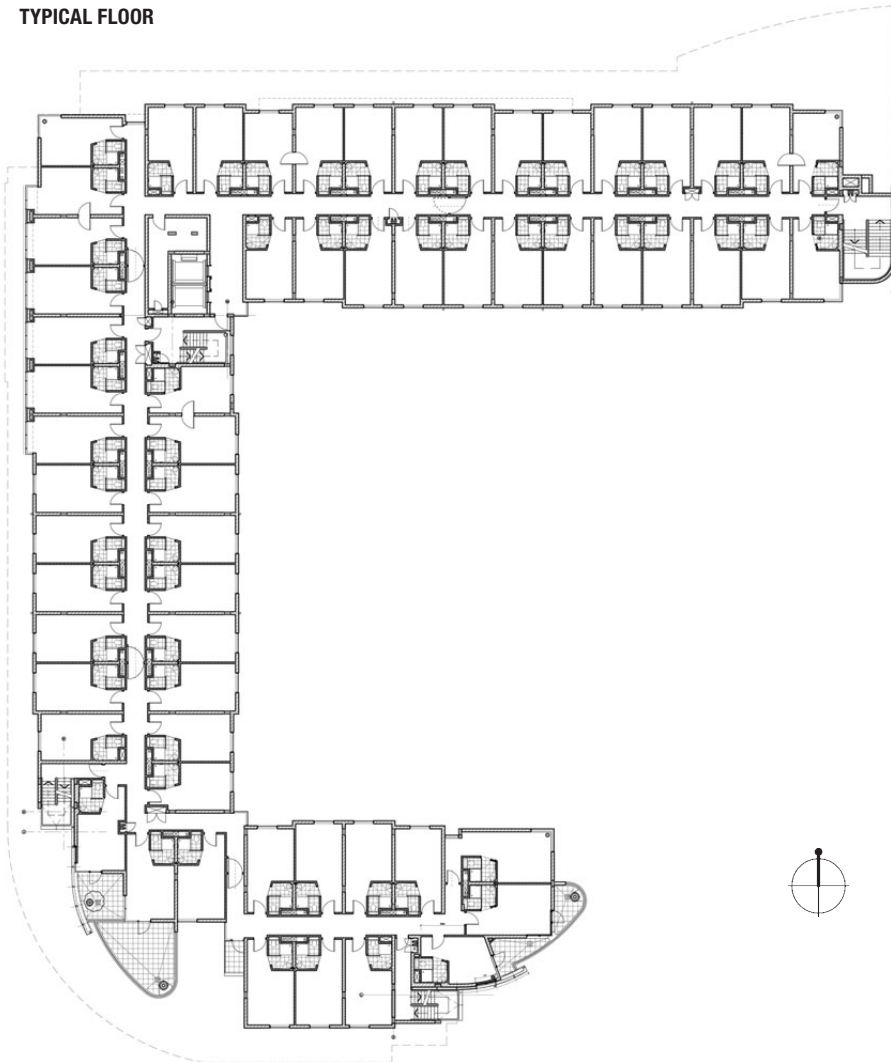
Conclusion

Whilst Holiday Inn Express is no doubt a brand that competes on price, Robert Silke is quick to point out that “good design and good taste needn’t cost any more to build than bad design - and ISO Leisure have pulled out all stops in order to put their best foot forward - by simply giving more.”

ISO Leisure, Louis Karol, MLC and Proman have set out to challenge the prevailing cynicism in the South African

hotel industry that perpetuates the practice of deliberately dumbing down the design and finish of mid-range hotels - sometimes in order to protect the interests of four and five star properties owned by the same operator. Indeed, the development team have taken the rather unprecedented leap of simply offering the best possible product available - regardless of market segmentation - and endeavouring to create a new kind of hotel that defies rating in terms of the old star system, offering discounted, limited service - but with the high-end design and comfort. The end result is, as stated previously, more ‘boutique’ than ‘budget’.

TYPICAL FLOOR



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ISO Leisure
Hotel Developers

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Quantity Surveyors

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