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THE GOOD LIFE

7th BIRTHDAY
ISSUE

Top Billing

JULY 2011

The read of your life

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A PERFECT
CURRY

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*where the
world meets*

WILD
BOYS

LEGENDS HIT
THE FALLS

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Namibia R23-64 Other countries R23-64



10007

**KEIRA
KNIGHTLEY**
takes it to the edge

WIN!
A FABRIC
MAKEOVER
WORTH
R40 000

Knysna
POWER
HOTEL
*industrial ch
with a colour
coded histo*

JENNIFER
LOPEZ'S
Long Island
residence

26 LOOKS FOR
WINTER

FABRICS
UNROLLED FOR YOU

Heritage host

Hospitality and history set a dynamic encounter on The Garden Route

STORY NATALIE BORJIVA
MAIN PHOTO © TURBINE HOTEL
DECOR PHOTOS ANGIE LAZARO

MAIN PIC The Turbine Hotel evolved from the original power station on Knysna's Thesen Island, with its newer buildings in keeping with the industrial vernacular of the existing structure. Original chimneys were kept and the site was scoured for elements that could be re-used. Old bricks, wood and windows were all recycled to lend a unique and historical flavour to the hotel.

INSET ABOVE Scattered throughout the hotel in whimsical style are literally hundreds of pressure gauges, with the irony being that the whole place is imbued with a sense of relaxation – the very opposite of its original function.

THE TURBINE HOTEL IS AN INSPIRING EXAMPLE of entrepreneurial industriousness and creative foresight. For what was once a derelict former power station – the site of which was used for almost a decade as a dumping ground – is now residence to a unique 24-room boutique hotel, spa and conference facility. The structure has a history colourfully befitting its Heritage-registered status. Began as a timber processing plant in 1923 by the Norwegian settler Charles William Thesen, it commands a site on Thesen Island, an intriguing environmental spiderweb of 19 man-made islands lying on the Knysna Lagoon, crisscrossed by tidal waterways and bridges. Wood waste from the mill was burnt to drive the power station turbines which, in turn generated electricity for both Knysna and Plettenberg Bay – it was an operation that lasted right up until the mid 1970s. The power station, built in sections at the start of the First World War and housing machinery that is close to 100 years old, officially ceased operation in 2001, when it was deemed as having an adverse effect on the surrounding environment.

The visionary developer – a team, actually – is Geoff Engel of Next Leisure Group, and his partner, Dandre Lerm, the owners of the much-loved Dullstroom treasure, Walkersons. 'We were immediately drawn to the site's historical charm and firmly believed others would respond to this too,' says Geoff. The task of converting the structure – essentially just a shell with ladders connecting the different levels – into a consolidated functional space centred around the preservation of the primary industrial components of the power station, befell Mike Louw of CMAJ Architects. A concurrent clean-up that Geoff attributes with 'proportions of an incomprehensible nature' was undertaken with the help of former Thesen factory employees to salvage original pieces of equipment for use in the interior. 'Though the heritage requirements stipulated the retention of only one turbine and one boiler, we were intent on including as much of the old equipment as possible.'

What results is an arresting display of brightly painted mechanical innards, forming an integral part of the industrial aesthetics, while simultaneously evoking a constant reminder of the structure's value for time-motion on the visiting guests. This mechanical lineage is played to its most dramatic effect in the glass-enclosed, sky-lit courtyard housing the cafe-style restaurant and reception area where three massive turbines dominate.

Long-time friends and colleagues of Geoff, Laurence Brick and Joy Rea of Loads of Living, materialised an interior brief that called for eclectic luxury. The intention of maintaining consistent historical reference throughout was happily aided by old books, ledgers, dials, knobs, signage and various other interesting artefacts collected during the clearing-up process. Such was Joy's enthusiasm and commitment that she spent two weeks in Knysna carrying out a thorough investigation of the island and the power station, an undertaking investigating charming attention to detail and enhancing the hotel's unique, localised signature. Cushions featuring archive photographs of historical Knysna and upholstery fabrics have been custom-printed with Knysna's famed loeries and seashores.

The rooms are the real treat. Each of the Turbine's suites and five wings have been individually named and decorated with either the natural environment or the history of Knysna in mind. The gentle turquoise blue and greens of the Lagoon Wing conjure up images of swaying sea grass, while the top level honeymoon Oyster Suite is a shimmering patina of mother-of-pearl, taupe and silver. Paying tribute to the tradition of sailing, the Regatta Wing is decked out in wide stripes of alternating red or duck-egg blue and white with scatter cushions depicting images of old schooners, flags, maps and yachting tackle. Every room contains at least two or three historical photographs of the building at some stage of its operation, either as a timber processing plant or a power station. 'It has been a labour of love creating this living museum, securing its fascinating history and industrial integrity in an exciting contemporary setting,' says Joy. 📍

The Turbine at Thesen 044-302-6745/6, turbinehotel.co.za





THIS PAGE The double-volume entrance inspired the "art gallery" approach, which owner Geoff Engel and good friend Joy Rea use to promote up-and-coming South African artists. All the art in the common areas of the hotel is for sale and, consequently, changes regularly. Thick glass panes set into the entrance foyer floor reveal some of the original pipework. The red velvet couch is used effectively to add drama and a focal point to this huge space.



| COLOUR CODE | |
|--------------------------|------------|
| SALT WATER COOLING | Green |
| PROCESS WATER | Blue |
| POTABLE WATER | Yellow |
| CONDENSATE LINES | Red |
| STEAM | Orange |
| OIL COOLERS AND LINES | Light Blue |
| COMPRESSED AIR | Dark Blue |
| ALL VALVE HANDLES | White |
| FLOOR MARKS | Yellow |
| HAND RAILS | Orange |
| KNEE RAILS | Yellow |
| TURBINES | Orange |
| FIRE FIGHTING | Red |
| BOILER FEED WATER | Blue |
| SWITCHGEAR AND EQUIPMENT | Orange |
| ALL MILL MACHINERY | Orange |
| STRUCTURAL STEEL | Orange |
| MOTORS AND GEARBOXES | Orange |
| WHEELS ON WAGGERS | Orange |
| MOTIV LIGHTS ETC. | Orange |

TOP LEFT The Tapas bar has a comfortable, masculine feel, with an original crane hook taking up pride of place in a spot you would normally expect a beautiful chandelier to occupy. The wooden window frames are original and were retrieved when clearing the site. Azania chairs by Petite are upholstered in Arabesque Lipstick from The Fabric Library. Bamieki stool from Amatuli Artefacts. Historical prints of Theseus Island are framed in recycled wooden frames, Loads of Living.

ABOVE The original colour chart was found in the derelict building and now hangs in the Turbine Hall above the Island Cafe restaurant. **LEFT** All the pipes were repainted in the original colours designating their content, as per the original colour chart above. As the pipes are such a prominent feature, the rest of the decor had to be carefully considered.

BELOW In some areas the pipes had to be raised to make allowance for head height. The hotel is filled with a curious assortment of eclectic objects. This old bicycle was found in a junk shop on the Garden Route.





ABOVE The chandelier was found in a decor store in Knysna and the 3-way ottoman (upholstered in white vinyl) was sourced by Joy, who put together the interior of the hotel with Laurence Brick. Armchairs are by Petite, upholstered in 'Limelight's Pear' by Home Fabrics. Scatter cushions by Clinton Friedman.

RIGHT A charming area filled with inviting couches and comfortable cane furniture, the courtyard lounge has a magnificent fireplace for chilly winter days and, in summer, a cool colonial ambience pervades. As with the reception area, the walls are lined with works by South African artists. Debbie Jowett of Simran Interiors was responsible for all the upholstery and the scatter cushions. As a reminder of the history of Knysna's wood production, recycled wooden side tables by Zander van Niekerk of One Good Turn have been used throughout the hotel.





THIS PAGE Two suites have glass-encased bathroom balconies that incorporate specially-designed blinds rolling up from below for guests to adjust the height for privacy. Underscoring the heritage feel, spaces are peppered with Period French chairs and given a modern take with contemporary fabrics. Many of the scatter cushions have been made-up in fabrics custom-printed by the Design Team fabrics. Striking walls feature fabrics that have been fab-coated and applied as wallpaper. The 'stump' table is from One Good Turn and the silver lamp from African Affair in Sedgfield.



DESIGNER SWAG

Recycle, recreate and re-inspire. Owner Geoff Engel and his team literally raised this hotel like a phoenix from the ashes, being inspired by the original rawness as well as the actual ashes from the fire as inspiration to lead the decor. There are great pieces throughout the hotel that, although very old, take on a very contemporary industrial vibe in the context of the space.



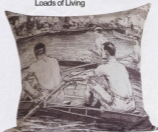
♻️ Armchair
R4 900, extel fabric
Malibu Resort



♻️ Recycled frames,
various prices
Loads of Living



♻️ Orbif canvas, 60x120cm R520 At Home



♻️ Bespoke cushions made for the hotel from old pictures of schooners from Krynata POA.



♻️ The Original clocking in clock that served the power station workers for many years (Not for sale)