

Sunset in Camps Bay, and the landmark Blues Restaurant has set our table right up against a bay window. The sea's as smooth as water in a designer washbasin; a light breeze teases the palm trees; and ochre streaks the horizon like gleaming wooden beams.

Blues is airy, laid-back, friendly and classy. With the panorama on offer and the restaurant's beach-house ambience, it feels like we're throwing a housewarming party in a Glen Beach bungalow, and our guests are soon a swirl of bubbly flutes and genial chit-chat.

On learning that anything they say during the evening is publishable unless the morsel of juicy *skimmer* is declared 'off the record', Jeremy Stewart of Source Interior Design, and Simon Duffet and Jonathan Kark of @vantage Procurement, smoothly switch from business to small talk without skipping a beat – the subject of choice? Fishing in the Seychelles. When Jeremy's not working on the interior designs of the 300 residential units on Eden Island, he's enjoying the rich fishing opportunities on the Outer Islands. The three men continue to recount journeys involving chartered planes, K-Way clad fly-fisherman wannabees, giant tortoises, houseboats, and wading through lagoons some 15km wide. New Zealand is almost as alien to them as the shores of the Seychelles: 'I've never seen so many women tractor drivers in my life – there's no labour there!' Jeremy jokes. Nor crime, it would seem. He tells us about an unmanned garage sale with an 'honesty box' for cash collections. Their rugby fields look nice, though. Simon reckons if he were to make the trip to NZ it would have to coincide with the 2011 Rugby World Cup.

Of course, if you've earned your place in one of Cape Town's more elite suburbs, you'll want to make it as fine as can be, which is why you'd turn to our co-hosts of the evening, Nick Gluckman, owner of Oggie Hardwood Flooring, and Siobhan Thomas, founder/director of Flush Bathroom Interiors, who between them have upped the grandeur quotient of many a private home and five-star establishment.

'When people step into a home with real hardwood floors, they immediately notice and



Words **Yaron Blecher**
Photographs **Andy Lund**

Tap on wood

Oggie Hardwood Flooring and Flush Bathroom Interiors co-hosted a Property Dinner at Blues Restaurant to thank their preferred clients for their ongoing support

comment on it,' Nick tells us over starters. His products have caught the eye of SA's homeowners, and not just the wealthy, either: Oggie's website showcases clients from around the Western Cape, from Hermanus to Stellenbosch, Clifton to Constantia. Surprising, he says, many of his customers are in their early 30s. 'People save up for a wooden floor, like they would for a painting,' Nick explains.

Oggie's the only flooring specialist in SA to offer FSC-certified wood. Cracking the nod from the Forest Stewardship Council is no picnic in the woods, either. Over and above having to pass the international conservation group's rigorous exams, the FSC carries out audits of his extensive range of flooring stock, Nick tells us. But it was worth the sacrifice, since he's now created a niche for himself.

i GUEST LIST

Natalie Billings, Dennis Fabian Berman Architects
Yaron Blecher, Media Nova
Simon Duffet, @vantage Procurement
Nick Gluckman, Oggie Flooring
Bianca Groenevelt, Greg Wright Architects
Wayne Jordaan, Media Nova
Jonathan Kark, @vantage Procurement
Neal Ludick, Keith Interior Design
Natalia Mardarowicz, Robert-Thomson.com
Greg Scott, Greg Wright Architects
Michelle Soloman, Flush Bathroom Interiors
Jeremy Stewart, Source Interiors
Monique Steyn, Media Nova
Shaun Thomas, Flush Bathroom Interiors
Siobhan Thomas, Flush Bathroom Interiors
Lucille van der Spuy, Cécile & Boyd's
Tony Vaughan, Media Nova
Lauren Visser, Rick Brown Architects

[PROPERTYDINNER]

Nick has also won firm fans in the corporate sector, among them Lucille van der Spuy, an interior designer with Cécile & Boyd's, whose reputation for professionalism and business excellence garners her regular invites to our Property Dinners. 'Your products are just so different and amazing; the textures and the colours... If you look at the range, you won't ever say that it's all one thing,' she compliments Nick.

'That's because Oggie's FSC Oak is so versatile,' Nick explains for the benefit of those of us round the table that wouldn't know 'walnut' from 'walrus'. 'With the variety of finishes available, you can create virtually any look, and yet still use an environmentally friendly floor. Oak is, with good reason, Europe's favourite hardwood floor.'

'But why are we designers still so drawn to exotics?' Bianca Groenevelt of Greg Wright Architects asks with reference to endangered hardwoods. Lucille also admits that the 'total luxurious feel' of an exotic hardwood floor is hard to resist, but adds, 'As interior designers we need to change our mindset and start loving the materials that are more eco-friendly.'

'Cécile & Boyd's did a floor with an "old farmhouse" feel using oak that Oggie had treated and oiled so that it literally looked like old yellowwood, knots included. So many treatments are done to one floor that you get a product that's totally unique,' Bianca agrees with her that green is the way to go.

Moving on, Bianca tells us her studio at Greg Wright Architects will soon be getting its own corporate identity – Site Interior Design. 'The people on our team are incredible and can offer a full turn-key project, whether retail or restaurant, corporate or private,' she says.

Equally thrilled about a new turn in her career is interior designer Natalia Mardarowicz, who recently joined Robert-Thomson.com. She's chatting with her former colleague, Lauren Visser of Design 360, and Neal Ludick of Keith Interior Design. Natalia's working on a new, top-secret line of 'sexy' furniture, which is due for release in February, while Lauren's been busy with the interior design of call centres of late, fitting them out from cabling to coffee mugs. Neal mentions the relaunch of the recently revamped iconic Oyster Box Hotel in KZN, saying the ceremony, which was attended by King Zwlethini, Prince Mangosutho Buthelezi and their royal entourage, was an amazing success. Media Nova MD Tony Vaughan has in fact just got back into town after attending that same event and agrees it was a glam affair. The refurbishment of The Oyster Box is just one of many high-profile projects worked on by Keith Interior Designs. Another, says Neal, is IFA's Fairmont Zimbali Lodge, which has been kicking around for a while now, but is expected to finally begin operations at the end of 2009.

Also fulfilling homeowners' need for opulence is our second host for the evening, Siobhan Thomas, founder/director of Flush Bathroom Interiors, agents for HANSA, TECE, Vitra and Dornbracht. Siobhan works closely with the architects and designers during the

'spec' phase of a development, making sure that they get the superb sanitary ware that makes the vision of their masterpiece whole. She'll even recommend a trustworthy plumber. Over coffee and dessert, Siobhan tells us that the current economic recession has done nothing to dampen the desire of customers in the middle- to upper-income markets for world-class luxury sanitary ware. Flush sales executive, Michelle Soloman, agrees, saying that September 2009 was her best month in five years.

We ask Natalie Billings of Dennis Fabian Berman Architects what the current trends in bathroom interiors in private homes are. Square, with clean lines – especially popular with the guys, Natalie answers, adding that she herself prefers a more rounded look for a place as sensual as a bathroom. Michelle tells us she has that covered, too, referring us to Vitra's Istanbul range, which features the sensuous, organic designs of Ross Lovegrove. Light panels are also popular right now, Michelle adds.

Nick and Siobhan share premises in Paarden Eiland, where you'll find their respective showrooms. However, Flush began the same way as many other great businesses – with a determined, gutsy entrepreneur working out of lowly premises, like a garage, or in Siobhan's case, a Kombi. She's since built up a formidable portfolio. One of her first solo projects was the Twelve Apostles Hotel – not too far away from Blues, on Victoria Road – in 2002 (her husband, Shaun Thomas, did all of the hotel's electrical work). More recently, Siobhan has been collaborating with Jeremy, Simon and Jonathan on the Eden Island luxury residential development, as well as on the splendid Taj Cape Town Hotel, next door to Mandela Rhodes Place, to which the three businesses also added the sparkle a few years back.

Last rounds are called. The Oggie and Flush Property Dinner has gone swimmingly, with no small amount of gratitude due to Blues, from the obliging managers and front-of-house staff to the efficient waitrons, who have kept the drinks and course after sumptuous course rolling from glorious sundown to temperate midnight. 🍷

Oggie Hardwood Flooring, +27 (0)21 510 5311, www.oggie-sa.co.za

Flush Bathroom Interiors, +27 (0)21 511 7888, www.flushbathrooms.co.za

THE WINE

Having started as a small, unknown winery in 1996, Kleine Zalze Wine Estate has slowly grown into a complete winelands tourism destination, offering visitors a tranquil environment in which to enjoy good wines, relaxed lunches or dinners at the award-winning Terroir Restaurant, and creating an overall experience with lasting memories. Visitors who wish to stay longer can do so at the four-star Kleine Zalze Lodge, which is set amidst vineyards. Kleine Zalze offers a range of award-winning wines, including the Kleine Zalze Cellar Selection Sauvignon Blanc (R45,00) and Merlot (R44,00). +27 (0)21 880 0717 www.kleinezalze.co.za



NATALIE BILLINGS AND MICHELLE SOLOMAN



WAYNE JORDAAN



NICK GLUCKMAN



SIOBHAN THOMAS



SIMON DUFFET AND NICK GLUCKMAN



NEAL LUDICK



MONIQUE STEYN AND LUCILLE VAN DER SPUY



BIANCA GROENEVELT



JEREMY STEWART



GREG SCOTT



SHAUN THOMAS



JONATHAN KARK

LAUREN VISSER, TONY VAUGHAN AND NATALIA MARDAROWICZ



i MENU

Entrée

Stuffed Baby Calamari with Anchovies, Olives, Fresh Herbs and Zesty Lemon
Game Carpaccio Topped with Peppadews, Parmesan, Capers, Anchovies, Olive Oil and Seasonal Wild Rocket
Umngqusho

Traditional Bantu Salad with an Italian Twist – Cannellini Beans, Chickpeas, Sweetcorn, Roasted Butternut and Sweet Potato

Mains

Mushroom Ravioli – Open Ravioli of Exotic Locally Grown Mushrooms in a White Wine Butter Sauce
Grilled Chicken Breast – On Jollof Rice with Turmeric, Almonds, Sultanas, Chilli and Cinnamon
Herb Line Fish – Lemon and Herb Encrusted, served on Capsicum Coulis and Sweet Potato
Sumac-encrusted Lamb Loin – Served on a Braised Aubergine Salad with Sweet Pepper Sauce

Dessert

Brûlée of the Day – Served with Homemade Shortbread
Clafoutis with Sweetened Mascarpone and Macerated Sultanas
Duo of White and Dark Chocolate Mousse with Sticky Orange Syrup

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