



originally, the aesthetic was inspired by the colours and forms of the river in front of the lodge,' says Boyd Ferguson who, with his design company Cécile & Boyd, has provided the creative direction and interior design for Singita Boulders Lodge from the get-go almost two decades ago. 'It was literally about bringing nature indoors with organic boulder shapes and sandy colours.'

While that was a directional approach then, much has changed since – particularly at this level of luxury, where travellers are now overexposed to fine and fabulous hotel interiors. His mission for the redesign was to challenge that sameness, offering instead 'a place that defines its uniqueness and individual truth', he explains. 'In ▶

LEFT Merged with the surrounding environment, the main living area reflects nature's deeper elemental palette and earthy textures BELOW The new outdoor dining pavilion



THE CALL OF THE WILD

WHEN SINGITA BOULDERS OPENED IN THE SABI SANDS 17 YEARS AGO, IT INSTANTLY SET THE BAR FOR LUXURY-LODGE SAFARI-STYLE. RECENTLY REDONE, THE LOOK AND FEEL NOW CUES VISITORS TO AN ELEMENTAL CONNECTION TO THE

WILDERNESS AND THE ESSENCE OF WHAT IT IS TO BE ON AFRICAN SOIL. LIZ MORRIS SPEAKS TO CREATIVE DIRECTOR BOYD FERGUSON ABOUT HIS NEW DIRECTION. PHOTOGRAPHS BY ELSA YOUNG



‘BLACK was *exciting to work with*. In nature, there is *nothing ominous* about it. In fact, I found it AS NEUTRAL and AS FRESH as white, which is its opposite on the spectrum – **IT’S SHADE’ *Boyd Ferguson***

design, it’s become more and more difficult to open people’s eyes and hearts because we are so saturated. Everything has been done to death. I was interested in expressing a space that went beyond just visual spectacle, that exuded the essence of the earthiness here and communicated it on an emotional level to guests. Context fascinates me and Africa can manifest a rootedness and connection to nature that is transformative. I wanted to channel that.’

Boyd’s team at Cécile and Boyd – including architect Sally Tsiliyiannis of Gapp Architects – integrated the outdoor spaces to be more immersed in the landscape, which immediately felt more grounded, while the furnishings and finishes were reinterpreted with more primal and elemental clout.

‘Africa is dark. It’s fire not water. The elements of fire are copper and iron. It’s earthy and I wanted to articulate that through rough, worn, carved and woven texture.’ And there is much of it layered in symphonic equilibrium, in scales, with smoothed surfaces and ▶

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Carefully curated arrangements of found objects including seed pods and thorns give the sense that everything has been derived from the earth; seating areas in the suites are designed to echo the curves of the riverbanks; rust and copper vessels from Anatomy Design are used throughout, reflecting natural elements of earth and fire; the lodge-suite bathrooms have been designed to merge with the outdoors, while still remaining private

Each of the 12 private bedroom suites exude luxurious yet pared-down style using a palette of charcoal, chalk and bone, which creates a deep and authentic connection to nature





The new look takes *nature-made and HANDCRAFTED DESIGN* with the integrity of *authentic African* provenance to a **PLUSH LEVEL**



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT A group of artists was commissioned by Cécile & Boyd to create sculptures reflecting abstract-modernist natural form as seen in the living area; similarly, in the dining room a mobile with burnished metal discs provides a sophisticated interplay with the other organic elements of the room such as bone, stone and wood; the entrance to the lodge OPPOSITE PAGE Bold textures and forms in the main living area compel the senses

softer textures providing the connective tissue of the aesthetic story. River-pebble walls, tree-trunk pillars, fossilised-wood stools and curved forms play with leather, burnished mud, copper, stone, bronze and slate. In the guest area, upholstery is a flinty charcoal textured weave with tie-dye cushions and sheepskin to sink into.

And, so, with the bushveld as a backdrop, an embrace of primal earthiness is created, which dials guests into a nurturing communion with nature and themselves. But, you need more to truly take primal luxury to the next level. Art and sculpture, which references mid-20th-century masters' fascination with interpreting nature in a modern way was the card Boyd played to achieve this. Paintings with Franz Kline-like expressionistic verve and copper Calder-like mobiles are a beguiling layer that takes actual organic form and makes it abstract. 'This way, guests could see in two interpretations – the actual and the abstract – how powerful and dimensional nature can be.' ■ Cécile & Boyd www.cecileandboyds.com

