

BIM in Practice. How far have we really come?

Written by: Marisca Deminey (University of Johannesburg)

Building Information Modelling (BIM) is significantly reshaping South Africa's built environment (BE), redefining collaboration, workflows, and the roles of professionals across the sector. The African Institute of the Interior Design Professions (IID) Winter Conversation Series (2025) provided an engaging platform for educators and practitioners to explore the growing impact of BIM and its implications for both Higher Education (HE) and professional practice.

The session was moderated by Marisca Deminey from the Department of Interior Design at the University of Johannesburg, representing a research team that includes Amanda Breytenbach. Their ongoing research investigates the adoption of BIM within the South African BE industry, with a particular focus on the Interior Design and HE sectors. Events such as the IID Winter Conversations provide ongoing dialogue, keeping their work grounded and connected to the real challenges and opportunities BIM presents in South Africa.

To facilitate the conversation, Deminey engaged three industry professionals:

Sonja Paul, Senior Interior Designer at Boogertman + Partners; Dewald Green, Senior Technical Manager at JLL Tétris; and Cameron Kane, BIM Manager and Interior Designer at Design Partnership and Morris & Co. Three interlinked themes: 'Advice for New Graduates', 'BIM in Practice', and 'Future Focus', were discussed, reflecting both personal journeys and collective industry transformation. The following observations were extracted from the online discussion.

Transition from Higher Education to Industry

The transition from university to industry emerged as a key challenge. Each panellist described their BIM proficiency as self-developed through experimentation, mentorship, and professional curiosity rather than formal training. Learning to navigate BIM, they agreed, is a continual process of trial, error, and adaptation. Paul advised emerging designers not to hesitate: "[you] don't have to know everything to start... just dive in". Her advice echoed a shared outlook that success in digital practice

depends on adaptability, lifelong learning, and active engagement with peers and mentors within the BE network.

BIM in Practice

While BIM's potential is widely recognised, its implementation across South Africa remains inconsistent. The panellists highlighted persistent challenges, including software licensing costs, fragmented workflows, and the lack of BIM know-how, which prevent active participation in BIM processes. Green reflected on the advanced implementation of BIM at a large scale, where BIM evolved into a Digital Twin. This digital replica allowed for integrated building life-cycle management, demonstrating how BIM can extend beyond design coordination to inform maintenance and operations. Despite the obstacles, the panel agreed that BIM significantly enhances collaboration, reduces costly errors, centralises project information, and provides individuals with the know-how to gain a competitive edge in an increasingly digital job market.



Cameron Kane



Dewald Green



Sonja Paul



Marisca Deminey

Dewald Green
Senior Technical Manager



Future Focus

The conversation concluded with an optimistic outlook on BIM's future as a driver of digital transformation in the South African BE. Kane envisioned a future where BIM and Digital Twins operate at an urban scale, supporting net-positive, sustainable design outcomes. From an academic perspective, Deminey called for a multi-stakeholder approach in which HE and industry share responsibility for advancing digital competency and continuous upskilling. Preparing students and professionals to adapt swiftly to technological change remains critical for sustaining the digital evolution of the BE sector.

As the industry continues to transform, collaboration among stakeholders will be crucial in bridging the gap between

theory and practice. BIM's success depends not only on technology, but also on the willingness of individuals and organisations to learn, share, and innovate together.

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Sonja Paul
Senior Interior Designer



Cameron Kane
BIM Manager and Interior Designer

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Your Voice. Our Industry. One Collective Future.

In a country rich with creative talent and diverse design perspectives, South African interior designers, decorators, and interior architects are making waves across the continent. But in a fast-changing industry, talent alone is no longer enough. To truly elevate the profession, and protect it, we need to stand together. That is where the

South African Institute of the Interior Design Professions (IID) comes in.

The IID is the only professional body representing interior design, interior architecture, and interior decorating in South Africa. And being a member is not just a nice-to-have, it is essential.