



# Vertical Energy

Inside Red Bull South Africa's Reimagined Cape Town Headquarters

scape  
project

Location: V&A Waterfront  
Size: 2 800 m<sup>2</sup>

At the V&A Waterfront, Boogertman + Partners has reimagined the national headquarters of Red Bull South Africa, transforming a long-standing office into a vertically connected, spatially decisive workplace rooted in its Cape Town setting. This design intervention goes beyond a mere cosmetic upgrade – the building's internal logic is reordered using volume, light, and movement, recalibrating how the brand occupies space.

Located within the Waterfront South Wing, part of the wider V&A Waterfront, the project arose from a moment of growth. As Red Bull expanded, the opportunity emerged to absorb the floor above its existing two-level office, ultimately consolidating operations across three storeys. Nearly 15 years after its last major upgrade, the office was ready for a complete spatial overhaul.

Boogertman + Partners, working closely with turnkey project managers Exéc Innovative Solutions, approached the brief as both a spatial challenge and a narrative opportunity. With panoramic views across the harbour, city bowl and distant mountain ranges – and with Table Mountain rising behind it – the building is deeply embedded in its context. This became the conceptual foundation of the design.

**A workplace shaped by energy, movement, and place**

Rather than defaulting to a generic global-office aesthetic, the design draws from Cape Town's geography and the pursuits Red Bull champions. From surfing and kiteboarding to trail running and aerial sports, movement is central. Fluid lines, organic forms, and a sense of motion are woven through the interiors, echoing wind, waves, and land.

The office needed to function as a serious professional environment, even as it celebrated adventure and play. That balance is reinforced through curated displays of sporting memorabilia collected through Red Bull's close relationships with local and international athletes, anchoring the brand's global reach firmly in South African achievement.

Activities synonymous with the city – from Red Bull Flugtag in the harbour to surfing at Llandudno and trail running on Lion's Head – established a clear conceptual framework. Each of the three levels corresponds to a layer of Cape Town's geography: ground, horizon, and sky.

At the centre of this arrangement is the project's most radical intervention: a triple-volume atrium carved through the existing floor plates. This precise removal of structure establishes a new vertical axis within the building. Natural light is redistributed deep into the interior, establishing visual and spatial continuity throughout the building. Animated by a sculptural stair linking all levels, the space is transformed from a stacked office into a connected architectural environment. Suspended dramatically within it is a vertically mounted Formula 1 car once driven by Max Verstappen.





**MEET THE TEAM**

**Architects:** Boogertman + Partners | **Turnkey project managers:** Exéc Innovative Solutions | **Installation:** Redwood Industries  
**Structural engineers:** LH Consulting Engineers | **Plumbers:** Brammer Plumbing | **Electricians:** Bornman Electrical **Electronic services engineering:** Diversified Security Engineering | **HVAC and Fire:** Intelegt Consulting Engineers, Coastal Air, Apex Engineering | **Photographer:** Paris Brummer

scape  
project

**SUPPLIERS**

**Lighting:** Regent Lighting  
**Carpets:** Belgotex  
**Joinery:** Revolution Shopfitters | **Office Furniture:** Ergoform  
**Flooring:** Tiletoria | **Wood Wall Panels:** WoodUpp  
**Countertops:** Atlas Quartz  
**Acoustic Ceiling Panels:** OWA | **Cement-based Decorative Coatings:** Cemcrete | **Sanitaryware:** Geberit | **Zip HydroTaps and Command Centres:** Franke | **Glass and Aluminium:** Alumen Glass and Aluminium



The atrium improves environmental performance. Daylight is drawn into the building's core and visual porosity is created between departments. Acoustic treatments, timber slatting, and soft finishes mitigate reverberation within the open volumes, balancing the space's social energy with functional efficiency.

**Rooted in Cape Town**

The ground floor is anchored in the city's shoreline and neighbourhoods. References to the harbour, the Bo-Kaap, and nearby beaches shape the material palette and mood with textured surfaces, muted coastal tones, and timber elements, while sports such as box-cart racing, surfing, and Flugtag add a playful touch. A welcoming reception sequence, an 'Athlete's Wall', celebrates local Red Bull milestones, alongside a sculptural timber counter.

Meeting rooms, training areas, and informal lounges are interspersed with greenery and soft seating, inviting collaboration and pause. Afrocentric patterns surface in 'The Kraal' meeting space, while unexpected brand artefacts - from a motorcycle and sidecar to the mounted components of a Red Bull Mini - reinforce a sense of experimentation and fun.

Above, the middle-level represents the horizon line where land, sea, and sky converge. Inspired by Blouberg's kite-surfing culture and big-air competition, this floor serves as the social and cultural matrix of the office. The 'Flight Deck' - a multifunctional bar, stage and town-hall environment - serves as the social condenser of the workplace, accommodating both internal gatherings and after-hours programming.

Oak slats, natural floors, and earthy hues reference fynbos and winelands landscapes. Operational teams are positioned here, drawing energy from the constant flow through the central hub.

scape  
project

**Elevated calm**

On the top floor, the metaphor of the sky introduces a lighter, quieter atmosphere. Reflective surfaces play with light, matte finishes temper glare, and the overall language becomes more restrained. Marketing, on-sales, and off-sales teams are housed in adaptable work zones designed for both focus and exchange.

More than an office upgrade, the project is a fundamental reorganisation of the building's spatial hierarchy. The insertion of volume, amplification of light, and choreography of movement across three distinct levels roots a global brand within a distinctly Cape Town architectural language. This recalibration ultimately balances structure, spectacle, and setting to create a reinvigorated workplace.

*"At the centre of the building, a triple-volume atrium cuts through the floors, transforming a stacked office into a connected architectural environment."*



Bob van Bebber, Senior Director at Boogertman + Partners,  
Reflects on His Brushes With Iconic Architecture.

# How not to build an icon



scape  
feature

*First-time meetings with new clients often begin with them telling us that they want an 'iconic' building. Usually, my response is: "Well, do you have 'iconic' money?" Most of the time, that helps to dampen their enthusiasm for icons, one of the most misunderstood and overused terms in contemporary architecture.*

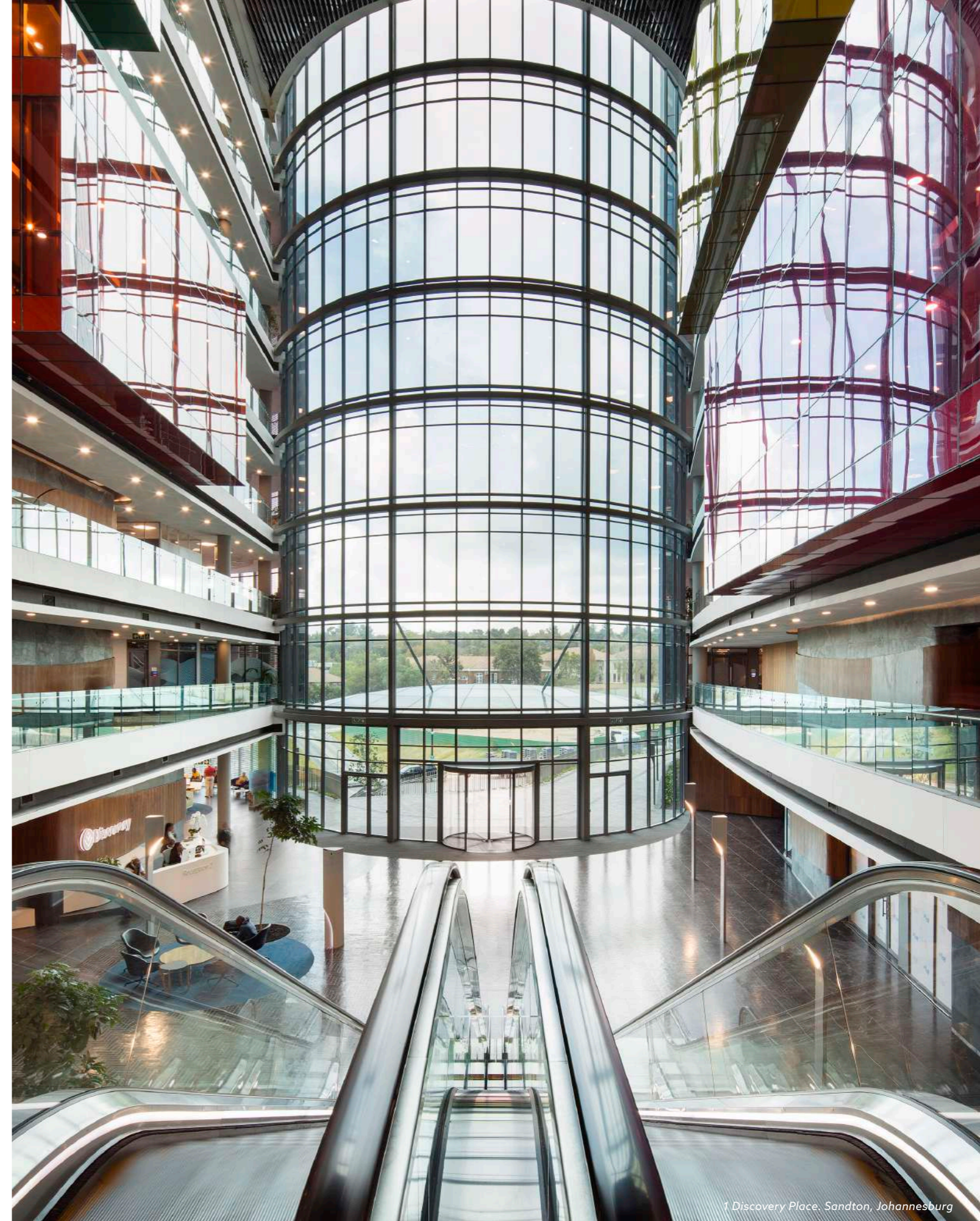
I'm sure there's something in all of us architects that longs to design an 'icon', but the blunt truth is that you can't set out to design one. (Knowing that is part of the reason, perhaps, we might choose willfully to ruin our own chances of getting commissioned to design one.) And if you do end up designing a landmark of some sort, you don't get there by pursuing the desire to do so. You set out with the hope of designing something relevant to the people, the place, and the time for which you're designing it.

It's a complete misconception, of course, that some sort of visually arresting quality is primarily what makes an icon. It's not just about grabbing attention (although a distinctive form helps). You can break the skyline, but not make anything architecturally meaningful. You can create interesting, unusual, sculptural forms and your building can remain unloved. You can break the mould, and add nothing to architectural history. You can build something at the bleeding edge of technical innovation and add nothing to the lives of the people who live in and around a building, or to the world around it.

A large part of what makes the difference between a building that ultimately matters to people and one that does not is their experience of it. There's a well-travelled quote, often attributed to US writer Maya Angelou, which says that people will forget what you did or said, but not how you made them feel. Much the same holds true for architecture.



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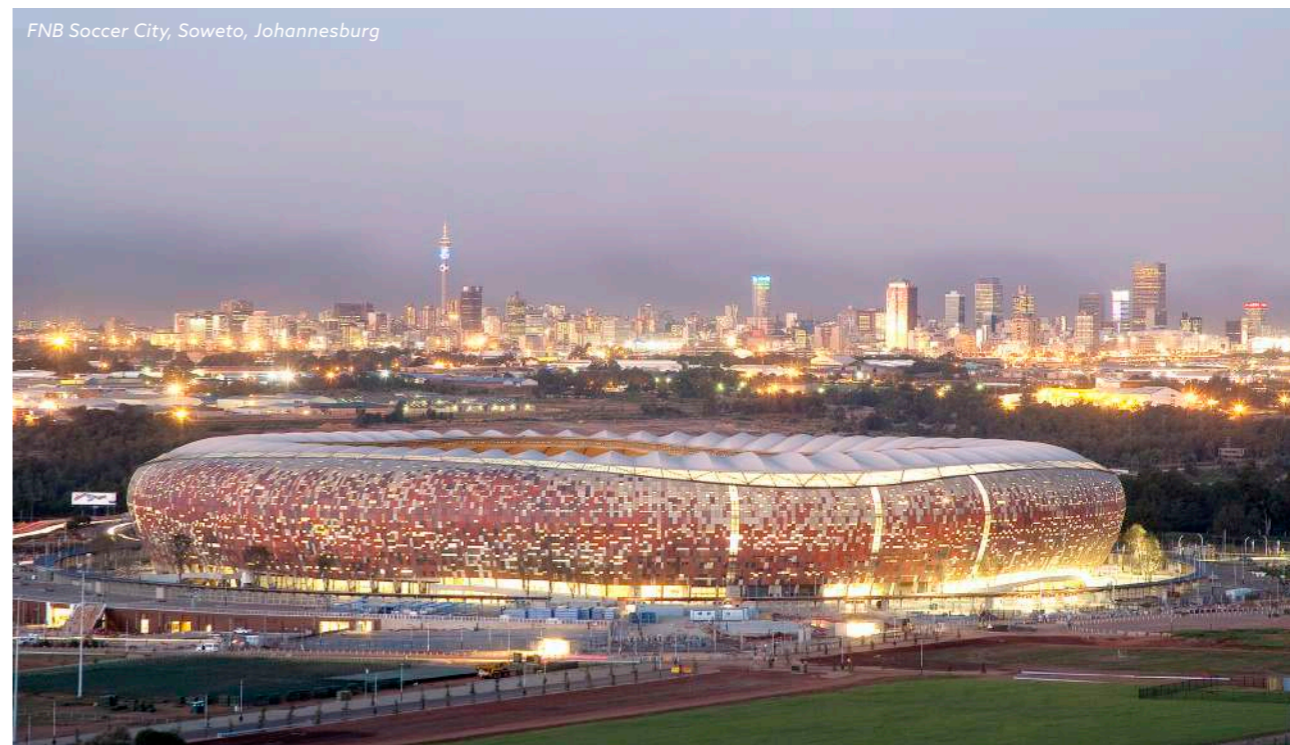


1 Discovery Place, Sandton, Johannesburg



scape  
feature

FNB Soccer City, Soweto, Johannesburg



The buildings that become meaningful (maybe a better way of expressing what 'iconic' means) are those with which people identify. If it in some way reflects their values and aspirations, or marks something important in the life of a community, or finds relevance in their lives, then they might adopt it as their own. It's almost as if they become invested in it. That's when it breaks into the public consciousness and starts to gain the aura of a landmark.

It's not about being timeless, either. Buildings are always a product of their time. In the case of a building like Soccer City, which we designed more than 15 years ago now, part of the reason it is still packed to the rafters at events like the Soweto Derby is its association with the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Soccer City in many ways came to symbolise a special moment in South Africa's history, and something of that is reignited every time the stadium fills up.

Soccer City is an example of how national identity can become attached to a building.

But a large, significant building like Discovery Place in Sandton involved another kind of identity: corporate identity. Discovery's recent acquisition of the developer's share in the building represents a more literal kind of ownership. But the fact that the company wanted to continue inhabiting the building, and that they felt some compulsion to protect its image, indicates that their identity is wrapped up with it in some way.

Closely related is a much smaller, quieter building that we did not design ourselves, but renovated. The BMW building in Midrand designed by Hans Hallen in the early 1980s was already something of a brand icon when we began working on it. The company chose to renovate rather than demolish it - which would have been the financially rational choice - because it embodies something important.

For us, working on that building was a matter of recognising and understanding what made it iconic for them in the first place, and preserving that as we updated it and made it

functional for a new era. Unless you have a very clear memory of what the building was like before we updated it, it's very difficult to see what we changed when you go there now. That renovation became a reference case for the company in how it treated important architecture in its global portfolio.

Working on these buildings, and some others like them, helped me understand the importance of how a building is experienced. While landmark architecture is often about a certain kind of stature, equally important is the opportunity to appreciate it. Buildings are often experienced from the public realm, so the quality of the open space around a building is fundamental to whether it is actually experienced, adopted and identified with in the first place.

For me, the success of a design is more about how it reacts to the street than what it does on the skyline. How accessible does it feel? What sets the Discovery building apart from many others of its kind is that it is most often approached on foot, rather than by car. It is open and inviting: you can walk straight in from the sidewalk. And it creates street life around it.

The Marc, also in Sandton, is almost impossible to see when you drive past it. Sure, we designed it to have an exaggerated presence in Sandton's dense urban environment – you can pick it out from the M1 highway – but you only really appreciate its composition as you approach it at street level. That's where the real impact is. The experience of approaching the BMW building is defined more than anything by the landscaping, which choreographs a distinctive arrival sequence.

This is all to say that creating the opportunity to experience a building is as important as the building itself. That's what brings a building to life, allows people to find resonance in it and to adopt it as a home for some part of themselves.

But the fact remains that when you start out with a design, there is no dazzling vision. That can only come later. Rather, how you get there depends on your response to an opportunity. It's a process of trusting the struggle to get to an answer, and you never know where the answer will lie. When you find it, you realise you didn't need a 'big idea' in the first place.

