

Walking in the Clouds

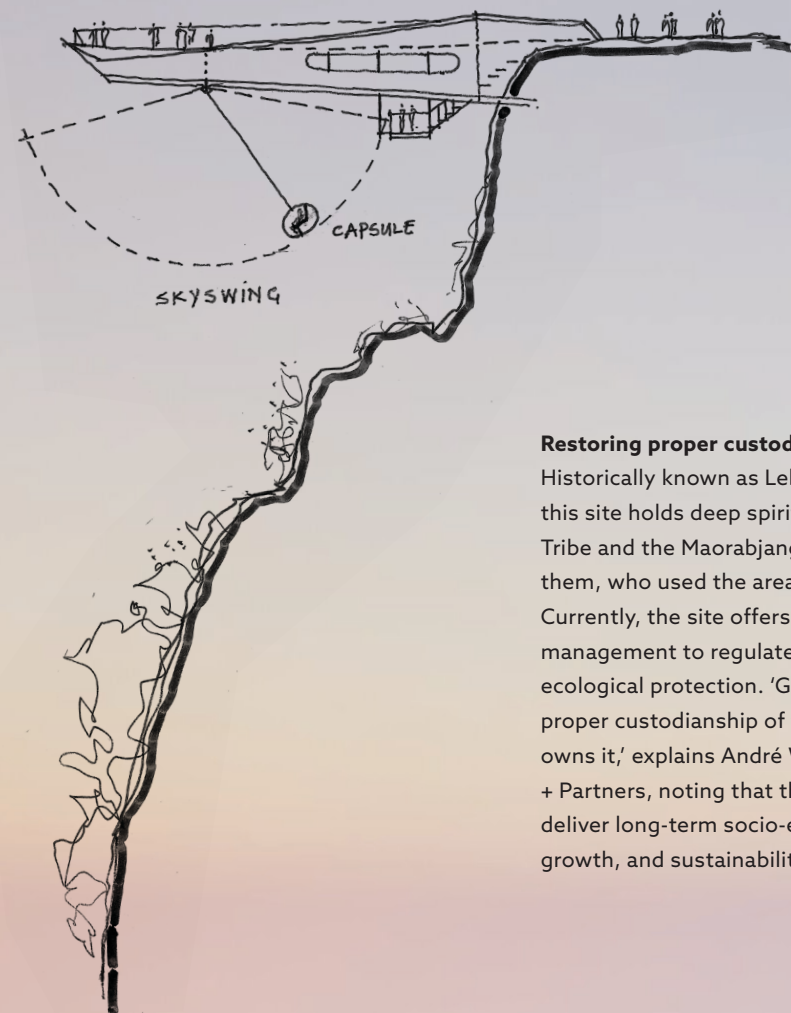
Boogertman + Partners' Vision for the God's Window Skywalk
Stretches to the Horizon, Anchored in Culture and Ecology

Perched on the edge of a cliff in the Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve along Mpumalanga's Panoramic Route, the God's Window Skywalk is a transformative tourism destination designed to celebrate one of South Africa's most breathtaking natural viewpoints. The gorge plunges more than 900 metres below, and the site is being reimagined as both a landmark and a bridge between ancestral heritage and sustainable modern development. Led by Boogertman + Partners, which won the project tender in 2019, the development is a collaboration between the Mapulana Tribe (the owners of the land), the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA), and the Mapulana Canyon Group.

Location: Mpumalanga, South Africa
Size: 15 000m²



Images courtesy of Boogertman + Partners.



Restoring proper custodianship

Historically known as Leboga Modimo (Give Thanks to God), this site holds deep spiritual significance for the Mapulana Tribe and the Maorabjang community that came before them, who used the area for meditation and gathering. Currently, the site offers limited facilities and lacks formal management to regulate foot traffic and ensure long-term ecological protection. 'God's Window Skywalk will restore proper custodianship of the site to the community who owns it,' explains André Wright, director at Boogertman + Partners, noting that the project was conceptualised to deliver long-term socio-economic benefits, community growth, and sustainability.

LEBOGA MODIMO
(GIVE THANKS TO GOD)



35 METRES



Architecture in balance

The architectural centrepiece of the new development will be a dramatic 35-metre cantilevered skywalk projecting from the cliff edge, paired with a suspended sky bridge, a dropped walkway running along the cliff face 15–20 metres below the ridge. This design allows visitors to experience the 'vertical rainforest' ecosystem of the cliff face for the first time. The faceted form of the structure takes inspiration from the praying mantis, abstracted to convey poise and tension through a contemporary architectural language of folded surfaces, planes, and ridges. In local mythology, the praying mantis is a symbol of good fortune, calm, balance, and awareness.

Dissolving into the terrain

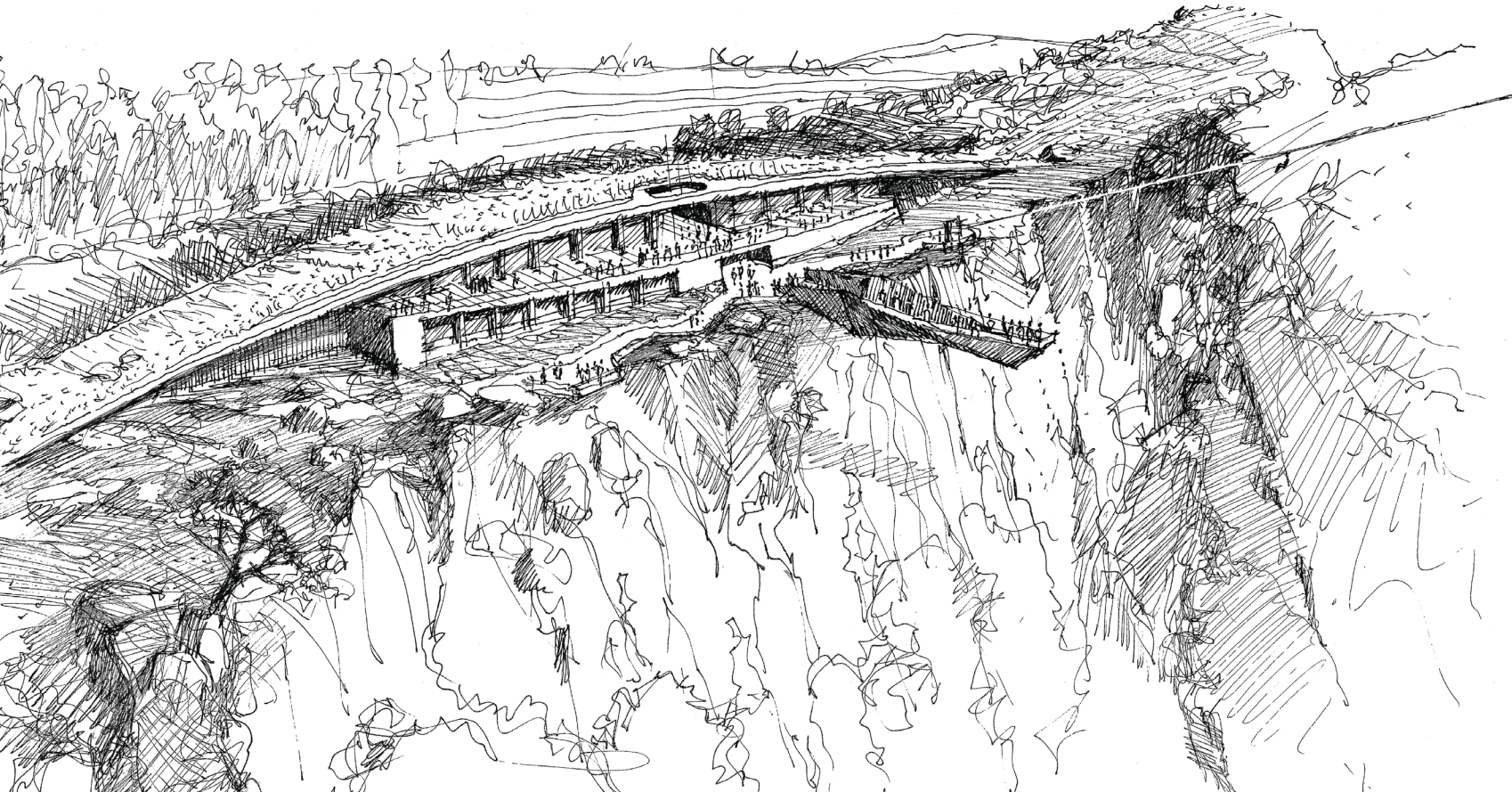
To ensure the building does not overpower the majestic landscape, the architects have deferred to the environment, explaining that 'You design so that the architectural intervention restores natural biodiversity, and you design so that the spatial experience enhances the sense of place.' The visitors' centre, which will house educational facilities, a market, and hospitality offerings, features a gently sloping green roof that rises from the ground to mimic a natural ridge. Developed with an ecologist, this roof will be planted with indigenous sub-escarpment savanna vegetation, allowing mammals, reptiles, and insects to move safely

across the site. By 'lifting the landscape and tucking the accommodation schedule beneath it,' as Wright describes it, the structure visually dissolves into the surrounding terrain while actively restoring biodiversity degraded by years of informal use.

A design for the future

Scheduled for completion in 2028, the project is rooted in the principles of respect for sightlines, sacred landscapes, and inclusive access. Universal accessibility was a primary design driver, ensuring the experience is accessible to all.

ASKED WHAT THEY HOPE VISITORS WILL REMEMBER TWENTY YEARS FROM NOW, THE ARCHITECTS AT BOOGERTMAN + PARTNERS POINT TO A SENSE OF COMMUNITY, CULTURE, ECOLOGY, AND ECONOMY HARMONIOUSLY BROUGHT TOGETHER BY A THOUGHTFUL YET DARING DESIGN INTERVENTION.



MANTIS INSPIRATION -
POISE, TENSION, BALANCE,
AND AWARENESS, THOUGHTFULNESS,
AND SUBMISSION

