



OUT OF AFRICA

Earthy yet glamorous, the Sandibe Safari Lodge co-exists harmoniously with the wild creatures of Botswana's spectacular Okavango Delta



+ SPECIAL FOCUS: ISH 2017

'Water. Energy. Life' was the theme of ISH 2017, the world's leading trade fair for the bathroom experience, water and energy

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At the new marketing suite for The Corsiche, St James' riverside development on Albert Embankment, technology allows visitors to virtually 'explore' the views from each room of every available apartment.

ARCHITECTURE



Right
At the Artisan development in Fitzrovia, Dukelease Properties undertook a sympathetic approach throughout the extensive design process, which included drawing at all levels and stages from initial concepts to discussing layouts and complicated technical detailing.

Last year, Californian firm Matterport bought out Virtual Walkthrough in what was described as the first acquisition of a UK-based proptech – property technology – company. It demonstrated the increasing importance of using technology to refine, improve or reinvent the services relied on in the property industry to buy, rent, sell, build, heat or manage residential and commercial property.

The 'proptech' buzzword has been rapidly gaining currency in media, tech and property circles, and has come to encompass the role new technology plays in consumers understanding architecture and design in a new home. From highly detailed 10-scale models through to virtual reality headsets, these immersive experiences allow buyers to 'be' in and 'experience' a building or a home.

While this cutting-edge technology looks dominate the future, some developers continue to choose more traditional art forms over digital techniques, to bring to life a new project – such as hand-drawn sketches – which require a little more imagination,

and in some instances have become works of art themselves.

Speaking in favour of this more 'old school' method, Paul Cook, managing director of Dukelease Properties and a UK Chartered Architect with 40 years' experience, says that from the initial scheme concept, through every step of the design process, "drawing provides a raw, yet vital communication tool. It brings together the individual ideas and vision for all parties – from builder, planner, to interior designer – bringing the project to life at each stage of the development".

For the majority of his career, he notes, architects have had access to fast-performance computing power that has led to the ability to process three-dimensional technical information that could never have been imagined two decades ago. "So, why keep sketching? In the early stages, when the design needs to be less assertive; less finished or complete, drawings set out the perfect tone – it says, 'this is a work in progress,'" he explains.

THE DELICATE BALANCE OF OLD & NEW

Increasingly high-tech methods are being designed to help clients and buyers 'experience' new architectural buildings and interiors, from VR headsets to 360° visual tours – but there is still a lot of love for the fluidity and flair of hand-sketching

TEXT:
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PHOTOGRAPHY:
Courtesy of designers & developers



The 'before' sketch and 'after' photograph of a penthouse apartment in St John's Wood by Morpheus London demonstrate how close the concept and the final result are



"This approach enables all parties to add their creative flair and ideas to the design, helping shape and stitch together each design element. There's nothing sacred about the act of drawing, and often graphic illustrations can be hard on the untrained eye, and discourage those who may have good ideas. It's as much the role of the person that can draw to help bring out the thinking of everyone."

Alex Isaac, head of design at London-based studio Morpheus, is also a firm believer in the value of sketching, and specifically looks for people with this skill when it comes to hiring designers for his team. Sketching informs the whole design concept and once that has been agreed, CGIs are usually then produced; he says that clients respond well to sketches: "The design phase begins with Morpheus getting under the skin of the client, understanding what motivates and resonates with them. Initial drawings are then created to help bring the vision to life."

Similarly, at British Land's Clarges Mayfair development overlooking Green Park and Buckingham Palace, Squire & Partners' Michael Squire had a clear vision for the scheme which he illustrated in a series of sketches, including the grand hall and the expansive exterior from Green Park.

Over in Southfields, London, the Cambium development by Lendlease is centred around an urban meadow featuring an oak tree, believed to have been planted by celebrated landscape architect Capability Brown more than 200 years ago. Lendlease developed virtual reality for one of its townhouses to coincide with the launch of a collection of three-bedroom mews houses: using a headset, controller, or even the click of a keyboard, viewers can walk through



At the Cambium development by Lendlease, visitors can use a VR headset or even the click of a keyboard to walk through and experience every element of the home, from opening the front door and putting their bag on the kitchen counter to going up the stairs to the bedrooms or out to the garden.

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Richard Cook, head of residential at Lendlease, described virtual reality as "a game changer for new developments", as it allows new homes to be brought to life in a completely experiential and immersive way that purchasers can really engage with.

"It's also interactive – we've developed the technology so that you can change the colour scheme in the kitchen at the click of a button to suit the occasion or your mood," he explains. "Working professionals are increasingly time-poor, so having the ability to walk through a new home with their partner on their laptop or smartphone, at a time convenient to them, is enabling a quicker and easier decision-making process."

Technology is particularly important for intangibles such as the feeling of space and light-flow, or the exact view a buyer will get. This is a key factor at The Corniche, St James' riverside development on Albert Embankment, which has been designed specifically around the perfect view. At its new marketing suite, technology allows visitors to virtually explore the views from each room of every available apartment, including the two penthouses on the 25th and 26th levels.

Also, from an interior design perspective, gaining an understanding of how daylight is likely to affect the room across the day is important.

As Dukelease Properties' Cook says, "Unique design remains a prized commodity and will continue to deliver value. Many buyers want something that is one-of-a-kind, exclusive to them and not mass produced." ●

Left
Squire & Partners' Michael Squire had a clear vision for British Land's Clarges Mayfair development which he illustrated in a series of sketches, including the grand hall and the expansive exterior from Green Park.