The Commercial Project



N°19

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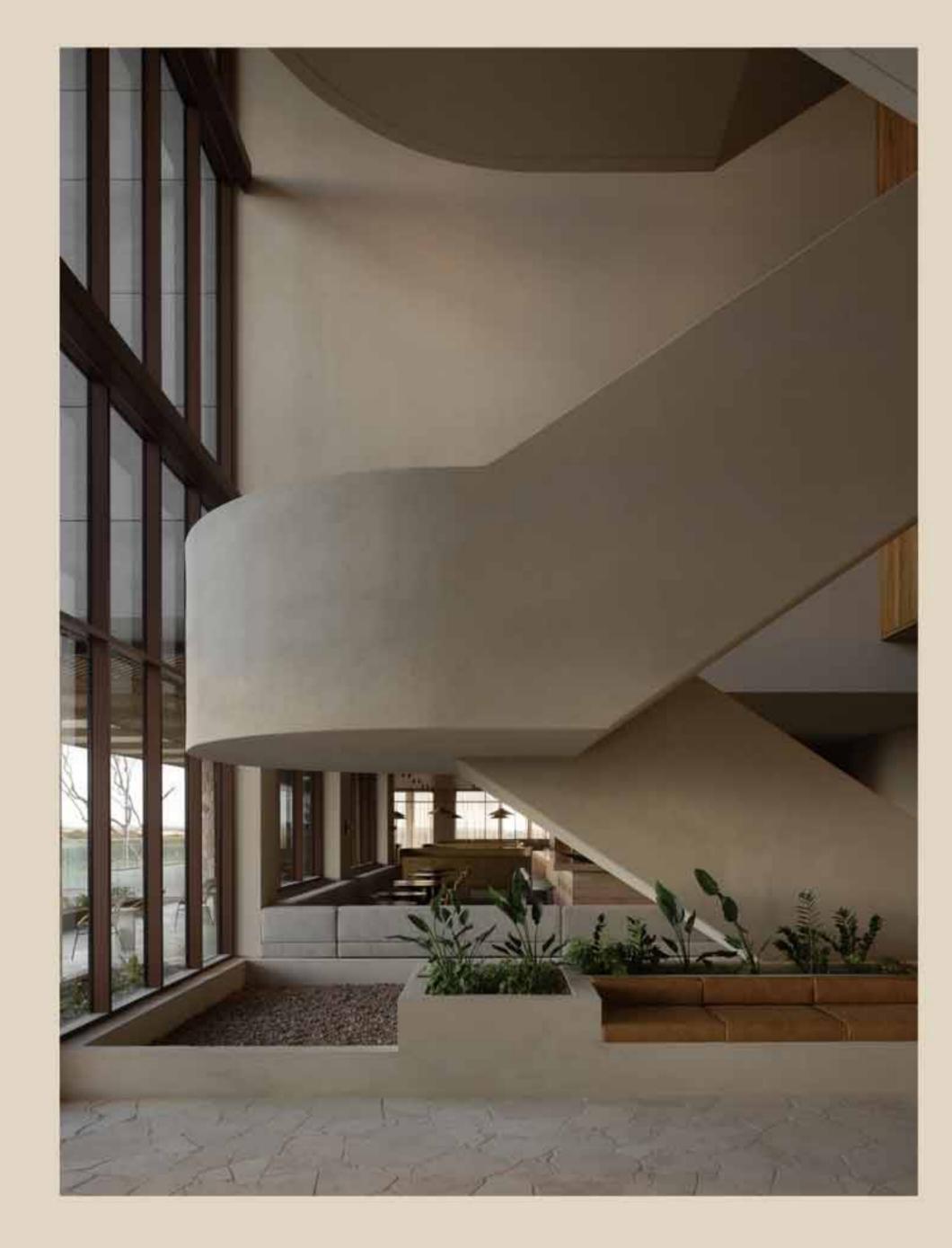
Monarto Safari Resort Studio Gram and Intro

Location Monarto, Australia
Words Riley Wilson Photography Timothy Kaye

Situated on the perimeter of the largest open-plain zoo in the Southern Hemisphere, the newly opened Monarto Safari Resort is a 78-room luxury lodge that communicates the vibrant African expedition tradition within the spatial context of the Australian landscape. Described by interior designer Studio Gram as "a creative amalgamation of two continents in an eclectic curation", the resort's spaces – which include guestrooms, an eatery, bar, oversized lobby, outdoor areas and a tranquil spa centre designed by South Australia's Genesin Studio – epitomise the similarities shared by two far-flung yet strikingly related places.

Aesthetic and cultural analogies between the South Australian scrubland and the African savannah served as inspiration for Studio Gram director Graham Charbonneau, who threaded a motif of weaving through the project palette. Located 70 kilometres east of Adelaide, the resort sits on the traditional lands of the Ngarrindjeri people, for whom the practice of weaving is a treasured and nurtured art. The patterns of their work parallel the long tradition of African basket-weaving.

This craft is overtly honoured in conical woven light fixtures that float above the dining space, custom weave-look banquettes made with strands of European oak veneer and curved pine seating that undulates in its interlaced form. But it also serves as a subtle anchor for the broader design.



Contemporary materials such as concrete are melded with traditional weaving motifs to create a design language that pays tribute to both Australia and Africa.



and grainy standard-grade Australian blackbutt rhythms of the site. The structure is also grounded on the ceiling meet vertical panels on the walls, in visions of solitude and intentional observation. extending sightlines onto a timber deck that seamlessly bleeds into the surrounding plains. "The timber is a literal weaving between the two to the American oak lounges by Mr and Mrs White floor plates," says Charbonneau. "The building that inhabit each suite. is separated into two wings and, through the materiality of length, we introduced this very visual weaving between the two halves."

Project architect Intro envisioned a built form - founded primarily in precast concrete panels, in-situ concrete and structural steel - that captured that reflect the shades of the arid mallee.

In the cavernous lobby, long seams of knobbled dappled sunlight and complemented the natural Local makers feature prominently throughout, from custom ceramic sconces by Adelaide's JamFactory

> The tectonic, site-defining ombre concrete bar was created by Studio Gram in consultation with Adelaide concrete fabricator Form-s. Meticulously prototyped before being poured and rammed by hand onsite, the bar features layered peachy tones

Rustic stone walling, milky travertine flooring and copious timber detailing translate raw materiality into an accessible and luxurious experience. A curved staircase billows up into a second elevation, where two wings house retreat-like rooms. Shrouded in linen curtains, half of the rooms watch over the resort's watering hole and its four-legged visitors, while the other half peer across rocky plains towards the zoo.

Surrounded by towering giraffes, spirited blackbucks and bounding kangaroos, the resort tells an evocative story of migration, congregation and celebration that encourages guests to dwell, nest and embrace the wild.

