



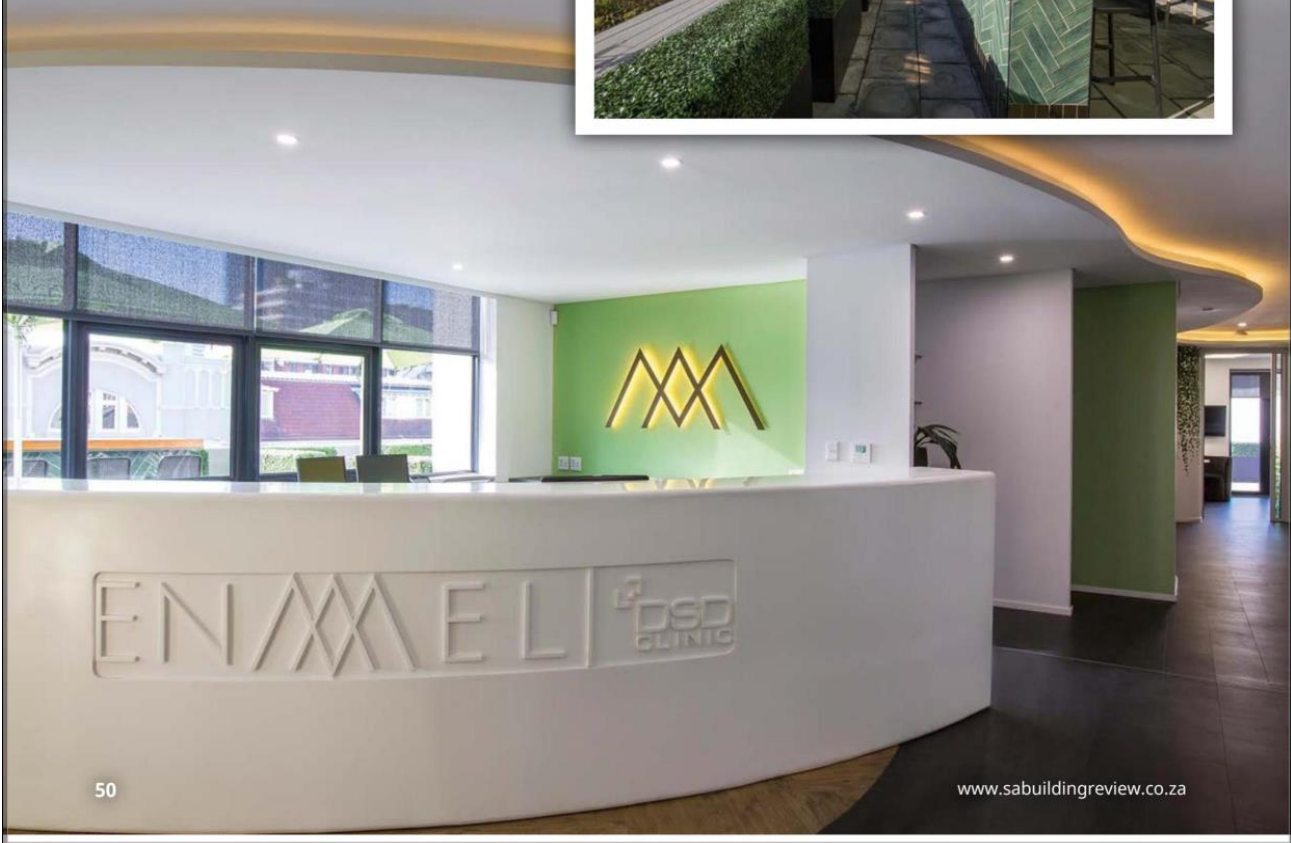
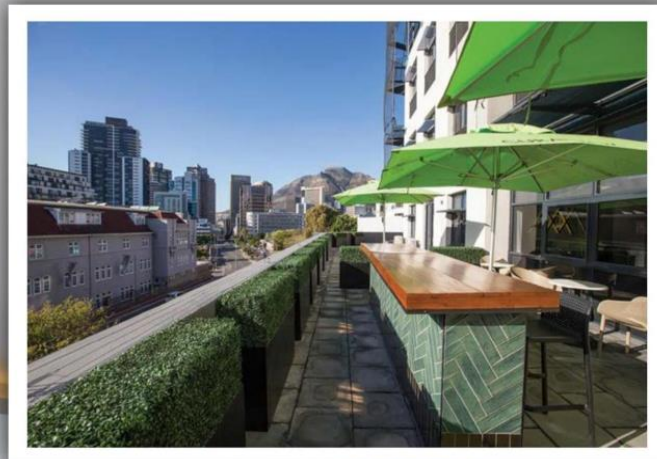
**PROJECT FEATURE**

Enrica van der Linden Architecture

# Organic design transforms the dental world

**For most of us, going to the dentist tends to conjure up feelings of fear and anxiety, and most predominantly cold, clinical and unwelcoming dental practices do little to calm our nerves.**

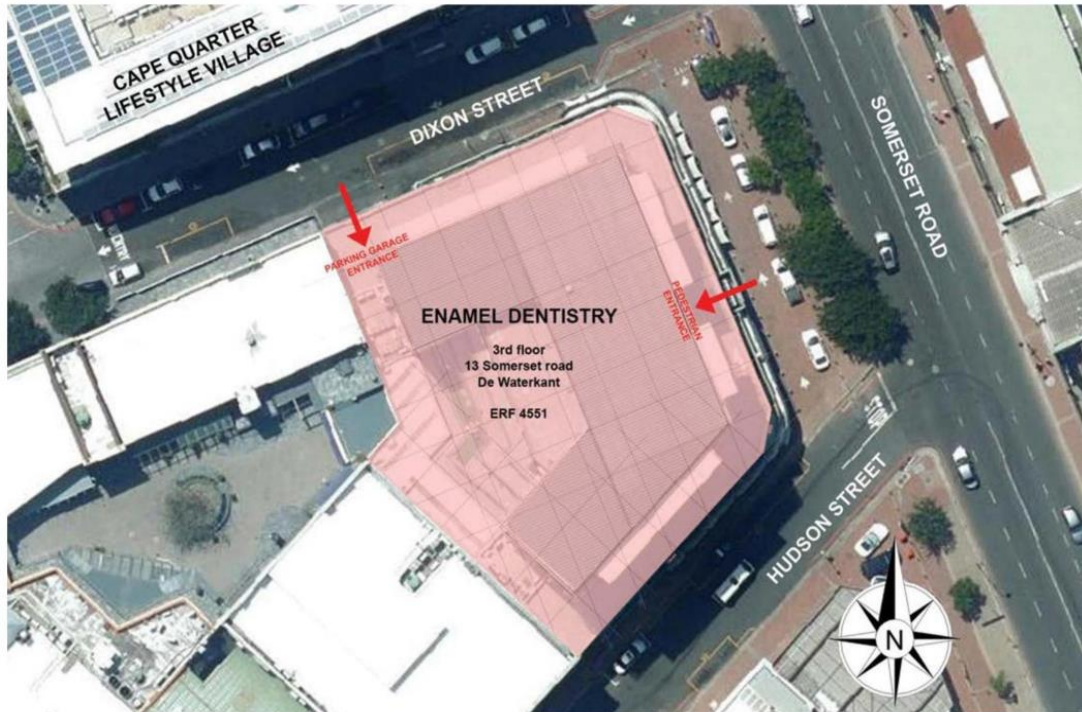
Cape Town based Enamel Clinic is bucking that trend though, brushing up to be one the best in the business (if you excuse the pun). As well as offering an array of aesthetic and constructive dental services, it also houses South Africa's first Digital Smile Design (DSD) clinic, where brilliant dental professionals come to be skilled in the most cutting-edge practices money can buy.





## PROJECT FEATURE

Enrica van der Linden Architecture



Top Cape Town based architectural designer, Enrica van der Linden and interior designer and behaviour strategist Kim Williams, were collectively tasked with transforming the rectangular 1 000m<sup>2</sup> space into a comforting area that is soothing to the soul and a world away from the sterile unattractiveness typically associated with dental practices.

Work began during the height of the pandemic and despite this placing additional pressure on the entire team, the female duo has managed to create an award-winning design that obtained them a finalist position in the design category of the Loeries 2022. A concept previously unseen in other dentistry practices.

### The challenge

As the clinic is well known for their pioneering, state-of-the-art technology, one of the main challenges was seamlessly integrating the architecture and interior design so it reflected this innovative approach.

Enrica and Kim needed to find the creative opportunity to take the space and create something extraordinary. The architecture and interior design involved transforming an empty/ dead space, understanding the functional spaces for multiple disciplines of this dental practice and academy, and tying it together with how they relate to each other in a modern sophisticated cleverly planned design that is sympathetic to the end user.

The architectural design had to include 12 surgeries, two sterilisation rooms, one case room, one laboratory, one concierge room and one photography lab. This was in

addition to the reception area and training academy that required maximum seating, not to forget space for medical, equipment storage and product displays.

"This project wasn't a straightforward design; besides the technical aspects of fire, reticulation, safety and ventilation, the anthropometrics and articulation of space between themselves, patients, and colleagues had to be considered. Different disciplines within the practice meant understanding the purpose of each discipline and how they relate to each other to find the opportunity, and place, for all to connect and flow," Enrica explains.

"The look and feel of the new space had to match the feelings of the patients as they are guided through the clinic on their own journey of physical transformation. We needed to utilise the creative opportunity of taking the space and designing something extraordinary – a beautifully serene and comforting atmosphere that emits an organic yet harmonious feel," says Kim.

### Conceptualising the design

The gift of life and organic nature of humans was the main source of inspiration for this project, as it created functionality without being clinical. Rudimentary straight walls, floors, and ceilings were replaced with soft curves and rounded furniture to mimic the organic curves of the body and smile.

"A central component of the design was playing with form so that it would be gentler and more attractive for the end user," says Kim.







## PROJECT FEATURE

Enrica van der Linden Architecture



“A human being is not square. The behavioural psychology is that we relax when objects are rounded versus straight lines that make us more defensive. Creating a flowing space with curves creates organic movement that infuses the space with a sense of serenity and calm.”

To create the unique customer experience, different areas were zoned off to craft enticing and beautiful spaces that customers could better engage with. Communal areas like the reception area embodied a similar feel and look to that of a boutique hotel while the DSD clinic discussion rooms were designed to create a calming and serene environment for patients. A revitalising space for doctors and team members to recoup was also a central component of the design.

“Straight lines were an obvious way to create the illusion of greater space, whilst the curves adjusted smaller areas, adding pockets for pause, interest, flow and harmony,” adds Enrica.

### Conceptualising the interior design

The interior design was also inspired by the M of the clinic logo which looks like a lotus, the symbol of transformation. A biophilic design concept was conceived to use nature to create a tranquil atmosphere and carefully selected custom furniture reinforced this sense of serenity.

“This biophilic strategy connects the brand with nature, creating a sense of grounding and revival. We used a combination of furniture, materials, lighting and wall coverings to achieve this, and combined an off-white colour palette with muted shades of the original brand colours to

ensure meaningful connections and medical reassurance,” explains Kim.

The curving walls, which are adorned with leafy cascading wallpaper and custom furniture are especially effective in providing a soft yet fun rhythm. It creates interests whilst making you feel at ease, and you never really notice that you are in a standard square space. Straight corridors have also been omitted, replaced instead with L-shape or zigzags ones with loftier ceilings to maximise flow, whilst the temperature-controlled atmosphere ensures patients feel safe and cocooned and dentists don't sweat in their gloves.

Plenty of natural lighting from transparent glass windows and doors creates openness whilst strategically placed LED lighting guides patients through the passages. Pin-pointed interaction points for Wi-Fi have also been added throughout the practice to facilitate communication and ensure the smooth running of company systems and processes.

Material-wise, a conscious effort was made to source from local suppliers to ensure sustainability and affordability. An anti-bacterial SUPERMATT from PG Bison was used on all cabinetry and resin surfaces to keep things hygienic, easy-cleaning polycarbonate chairs were used throughout, and stainless-steel surfaces in the lab and sterilisation areas minimised the need for replacement.

To save more money, special window blinds which repels more than 90% of ultraviolet rays were used instead of an air conditioning unit, green tag vinyl flooring was repurposed and bespoke wire art, produced by local street designers was used for décor.







### PROJECT FEATURE

Enrica van der Linden Architecture

#### The results

The clinic now has an inviting, non-threatening reception encompassing a curved green bench and oak tables with a striking, hanging wall garden. A sense of revival, serenity, openness and assurance is felt immediately, and this is continued in the surgery, which feels more like a bespoke consultation room aplomb with luxurious looking fabrics and curved hand-crafted artworks subtly popping off the walls.

The whole design is a powerful example of the positive impact creative innovation, and the psychology of architecture and interior design can have when orchestrated well. The acute attention to detail in every element has been critical in crafting a modern and sophisticated look and feel which sympathetically reconnects all users to nature.

The transformative process, which only took eight weeks, has not only fashioned a beautiful and enticing space. It has also resulted in a four-fold increase in revenue, a boost in new customer visits, and happy productive employees. Now that's something worth smiling about. ■

To read more about architectural designer, Enrica van der Linden, visit [www.enricavanderlinden.co.za](http://www.enricavanderlinden.co.za) and for more about interior designer and behaviour strategist, Kim Williams, go to [www.kimwilliams.co.za](http://www.kimwilliams.co.za).

