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INTEGRATING NATURE, A DESIGN IMPERATIVE

Curated by: Alessandra Bergamini



LUKAS RUNGGER
NOA, founder & architect

Integrating nature into design is a central concern for architects, as architecture fundamentally exists to provide protection from environmental conditions – shelter from heat, cold, sun, wind... Yet this very act of separation from the outside world is architecture's paradox, as every building aims to frame, interpret, and enhance the context in which it resides. Greenery – or natural elements more broadly – thus becomes highly desirable, yet all too often it is treated as a mere cosmetic addition, applied only at the final stages of a project. At NOA, our approach has been different. In our latest urban development project, Renneria, vegetation is treated not just for its aesthetic quality but as a strategic design tool, particularly in creating social islands and fostering placemaking. Agricultural green spaces and community gardens that support private food production serve functions far beyond productivity: their accessibility and appeal foster gathering, belonging, and social interaction. These green islands have the power to become vital meeting points and anchor a neighborhood's identity, whether in an emerging district or in any new architectural development. Ultimately, integrating greenery thoughtfully allows architecture to nurture both the built environment and the communities that inhabit it.

POOJA SHAH- MULANI
LW Design, managing partner & creative

The integration of natural systems within the built environment is not merely an aesthetic exercise but a critical framework for generating spaces that are contextually resonant and culturally grounded. At LW Design, we maintain that architectural and interior interventions which disregard their ecological and socio-cultural surroundings inevitably produce outcomes that feel hollow, lacking in narrative, identity, and long-term relevance. Our approach therefore prioritises an analytical reading of place, ecology, and community as the basis for design. This methodology is exemplified by the Ritz-Carlton Masai Mara, where spatial planning, material selection, and artisanal collaborations were informed by the intrinsic logics of the savannah ecosystem. The project's low-impact structures, Maasai-inspired forms, and locally produced craft embed the built environment within the region's environmental and cultural continuum. Similarly, the re-envisioning of Bab Al Shams draws from vernacular desert typologies, leveraging passive environmental strategies, courtyards, and tonal material palettes to strengthen the dialogue between interior space and the desert landscape. Through such projects, we argue that the integration of nature is an operational and ethical imperative, one that enhances environmental performance, strengthens cultural authenticity, and elevates the experiential quality of contemporary hospitality design.





ANTONIO GIRARDI
Pnat, co-founder

Plants are complex living technologies: intelligent systems capable of understanding, reacting to, and interacting with the environment in ways so intricate that they profoundly influence our well-being and health. Today, the most innovative way to design the spaces where we live, work, study, and heal is to reintegrate nature at the heart of architecture, making it a functional part of buildings, not merely a decoration. Introducing the plant world into our daily environments is no longer an option but a necessity: as we no longer live in nature, we must bring nature to us. One of the main critical issues in our buildings is indoor air quality: we spend almost 80% of our time indoors, often in environments much more polluted than the outside. Yet, plants, when correctly integrated into a project, can significantly contribute to reducing pollutants and enhancing the physical, as well as psychological, well-being of those who inhabit those spaces. In this field, one of the most radically innovative systems is Fabbrica dell'Aria: a botanical filtration technology that uses plants, roots, and microorganisms to naturally purify indoor air, leveraging the extraordinary biological capabilities of the plant world. This solution combines ecological sensitivity with scientific research, adding a direct, substantial, and measurable effect on air quality to the perceptual and sensory benefits of greenery. In offices, comfort and concentration improve; in schools, learning is facilitated; in hospitals, plants accompany the healing process; in homes, botanical technology makes what we breathe every day healthier. Valuing the intelligence of the plant world means paving the way for innovation that doesn't impose itself on nature, but grows with it. No longer closed and inert spaces, but environments that breathe, react, and actively contribute to the well-being of their occupants. From this perspective, the future will be made of places that are more efficient and technologically advanced, but also more alive.





A front-row safari experience

The Ritz-Carlton Masai Mara Safari Camp has opened in Kenya, one of the world's most spectacular destinations. Nestled within the National Reserve, it offers an intimate connection with nature and the region's rich cultural heritage. The project was designed by LW Design

From July to October, millions of wildebeest and zebras migrate between the Serengeti and the Masai Mara in Kenya, seeking fresh pastures. This epic migration unfolds against the backdrop of the Masai Mara National Reserve, home to abundant wildlife including lions, leopards, elephants, rhinos, and buffalo, alongside over 500 bird species. This breathtaking spectacle is now visible from the new Ritz-Carlton Masai Mara Safari Camp, an exclusive vantage point literally embedded within the African reserve. It's a unique opportunity not only to revel in majestic landscapes and fiery sunsets but also to forge a cultural bond with the Maasai community, deepen understanding of their ancient heritage, and witness centuries-old traditions.











Hotel operator: Ritz-Carlton
Architecture: LW Design
Frame tent architecture: East African Canvas
Main contractor: Highmark
Joinery: Nairobi Timber
Interior design: LW Design in collaboration with Sarah Rowe of Northern Nomad Interiors
Furnishings: Custom made, FF&E manufactured locally in Kenya
Handwoven rugs and upholstery fabrics: Siafu Home
Artists: Simon Bannister, Carol Beckwith, Angela Fisher, Ibrahim Muwanga, Gian Paolo Tomasi

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Author: Manuela Di Mari
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The connection between guest and environment is elevated through a masterplan meticulously orchestrated by LW Design, integrating ancient trees directly into the architectural footprint with a biophilic design approach. Twenty spacious suites exemplify exceptional immersive architecture: elevated three meters above ground, they utilize low-impact, labor-intensive construction techniques instead of heavy machinery. This allows wildlife to move freely underneath, simultaneously promoting natural vegetation regeneration and preserving soil health. Each unit serves





as an intimate treetop sanctuary, offering uninterrupted views of the riverine forest and vast savanna, with open-plan spaces where interior and exterior are separated by canvas rather than solid walls. An organic, curved tent structure, inspired by the bend of the Sand River and supported by local firms Highmark and East African Canvas, enhances daytime ventilation and porosity with nature. Guests can experience this close connection at all times, also through private terraces, infinity pools, lounges, indoor and outdoor showers. Throughout the camp, wood and semi-volcanic stone dominate, paired with furnishings created in collaboration with Nairobi Timber joinery, and accessories crafted by local artisans. These include hand-woven rugs and textiles from Siafu Home, a Kenyan social enterprise, and Maasai beadwork, meticulously integrated into joinery details and tableware. A series of artworks further enrich the decor, once again weaving a narrative of the Masai Mara's cultural and natural heritage.













