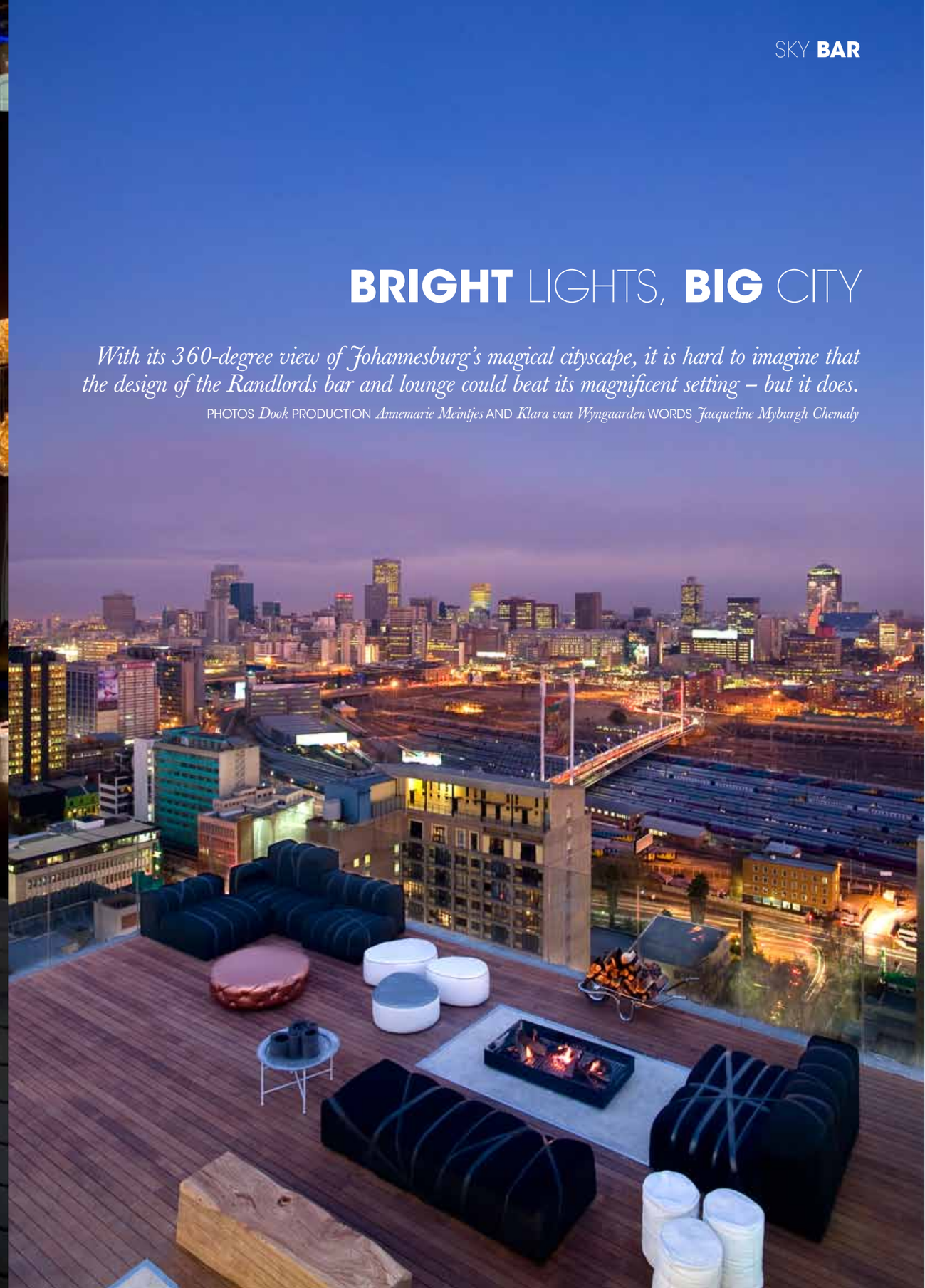
BRIGHT LIGHTS, **BIG** CITY

With its 360-degree view of Johannesburg's magical cityscape, it is hard to imagine that the design of the Randlords bar and lounge could beat its magnificent setting – but it does.

PHOTOS *Dook* PRODUCTION *Annemarie Meintjes* AND *Klara van Wyngaarden* WORDS *Jacqueline Myburgh Chemaly*



WHAT DO YOU GET

when you take one of Africa's leading architecture and lifestyle design teams, plus the duo who have conceptualised and run some of the most luxurious lodges on the continent, and ask them to create a bar on the 22nd floor of a Braamfontein office block?

A serious dose of sky-high African magic, that's what.

When Debra Fox and Chris Browne, the creative and management team behind luxury lodges such as &Beyond's Ngorongoro Crater Lodge, set up their own consultancy, they never dreamed one of their first jobs would be in grimy downtown Jozi.

But, just as they were the first to bring crystal chandeliers and Persian carpets to the world of safari lodges, there is now a new order in downtown Johannesburg thanks to their creative vision.

The jewel in the crown is Randlords – an unforgettable lounge on the roof of a Braamfontein office block that is already the talk of the city.

One of the first things Debra and Chris did was to call in the design talents of SIlvio Rech and Lesley Carstens, known for their lodge designs including those for &Beyond. The duo are said to specialise in "hand-crafted haute couture", creating complete design solutions to a space and always calling on the indigenous aesthetic and local skills to complement their work.

The teams came up with a concept in sync with a contemporary Johannesburg lifestyle: a little bit of Africa, a touch of burlesque and a lot of big-city sophistication.

The space comprises a gleaming bar and a collection of lounge areas complete with leather-wrapped couches, poufs, wooden stools and beaded swings, all with a drop-dead view of the city and its outer limits. Outside, it is possible to take in Soccer City and Sandton City in one visual sweep. At night, fire pits and a glass balcony make this the coolest rooftop spot in Johannesburg.

The menu includes a range of designer tapas, from pesto-dipped beef skewers to sky's-the-limit blinis and caviar. The not-to-be-missed party trick is a bespoke drinks trolley – complete with your own butler – that is yours for the evening. Also look out for the risqué videos on loop in the men's loo, as well as gorgeous waitresses wearing blonde wigs and gold boots. It's all very James Bond.

There has been talk for years that Joburg's CBD is being revived. Randlords and its big-city style may just be the tipping point.

• Randlords, Top Floor, South Point Towers, Corner Station and De Korte Streets, Braamfontein, www.randlords.co.za, 011 242 8637
• Fox Browne Creative 083 280 7304 (Debra Fox), 083 456 8994 (Chris Browne)
• Silvio Rech and Lesley Carstens Architects 011 486 1525/082 900 9935, adventarch@mweb.co.za

THE SUSTAINABLE CITY

RANDLORDS IS PART OF A SUSTAINABLE VISION THAT DEVELOPER SOUTH POINT HAS FOR THE WHOLE OF BRAAMFONTEIN.

South Point has already converted several previously neglected buildings in the area into affordable, stylish and well-maintained student accommodation, at the same time providing after-hours entertainment in the form of places such as the S-Bar, a coffee shop called SP Café, as well as the trendy Lamunu hotel on De Korte Street.

We all know that Sandton can't accommodate everyone and South Point's thinking is that Braamfontein can continue to serve the needs of students at the University of the Witwatersrand and elsewhere long after they have graduated.

The area that bridges downtown Johannesburg and the northern suburbs has already started attracting creative people to live and work in the area, serving it with a unique mix of fashion, food, art and theatre.

Given the location of Park Station on Braamfontein's southern boundary, this could be potentially a viable dormitory suburb for the Sandton business centre, especially once the Gautrain's southernmost leg is completed.

After all, not everyone can afford to – or even wants to – move to the north and a new-look, fascinating Braamfontein looks set to become a thoroughly attractive alternative.

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A LITTLE BIT OF AFRICA, A TOUCH OF BURLESQUE AND A LOT OF BIG-CITY SOPHISTICATION.

SKY **BAR**

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