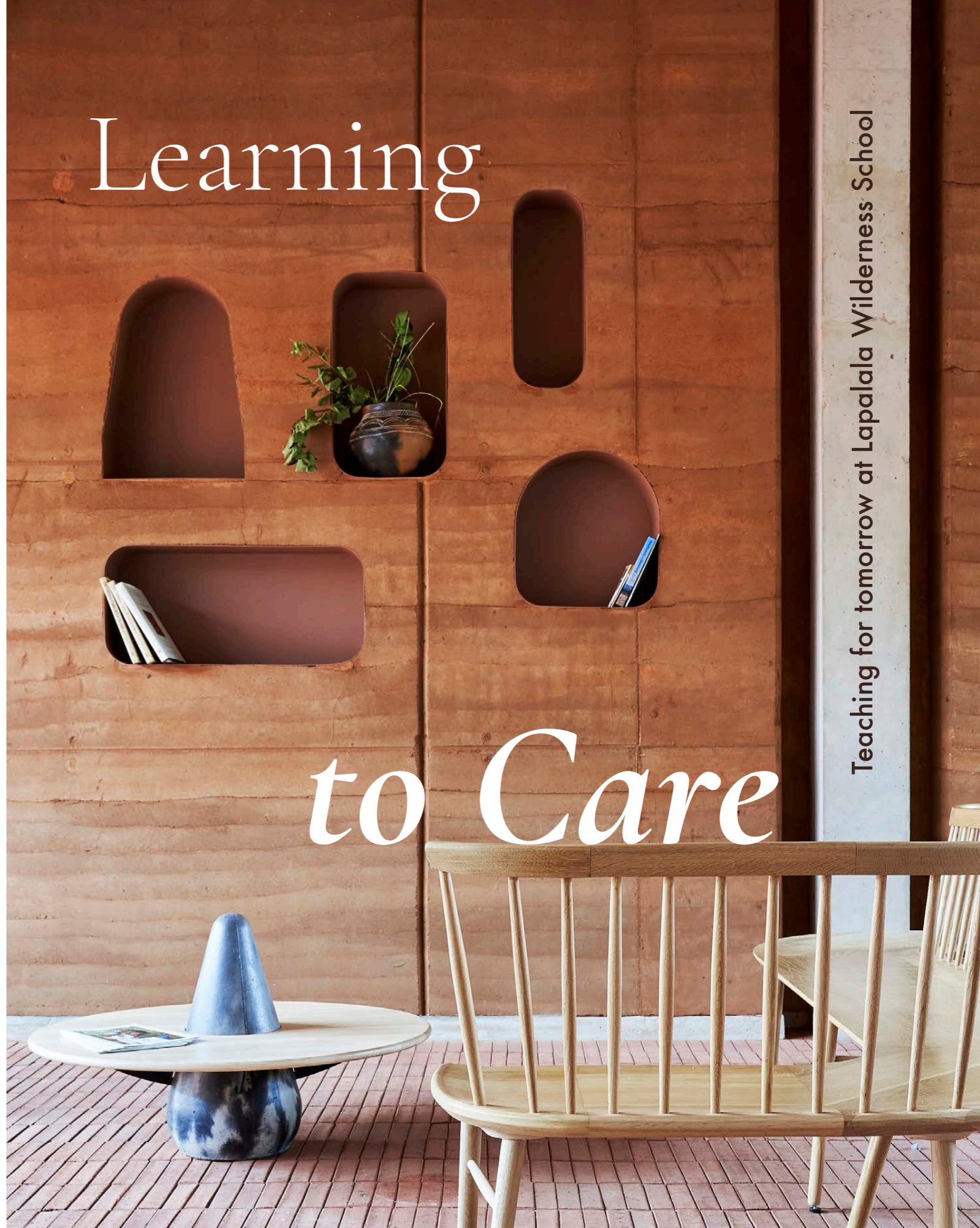


Learning

to Care

Teaching for tomorrow at Lapalala Wilderness School



O

n an expedition to plant a seed of value for diversity in the youth of today and tomorrow, Lapalala Wilderness School is an educational institution passionate about eco-consciousness and biodiversity. With part of that journey deeply rooted in the building that houses the pursuit, architecture firm Local Studio found themselves in the fortunate position to bring this eco-marvel to fruition. In doing so, they were able to inspire a new generation of environmentally-conscious youth, earning the building a Net Zero Carbon status and Merit Award from SAIA Limpopo region.



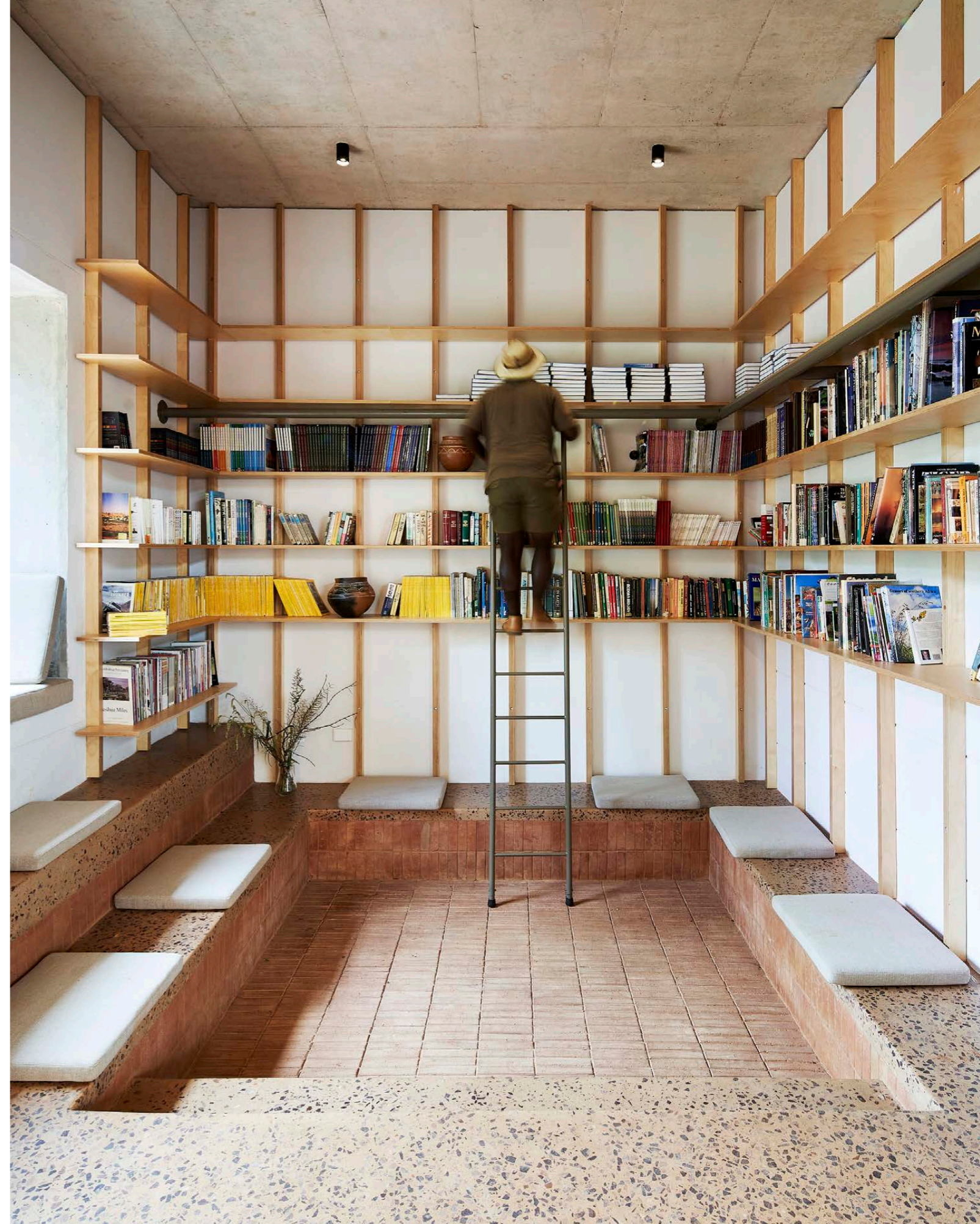
A function for the future

The goal for the school was two-fold: Firstly, the design needed to display the potential that lies within sustainable design by including an array of self-sustaining features and achieving a commendable Net Zero Carbon rating. The build also needed a design that made it practical to serve as a dynamic hub for environmental education, empowering students to become active participants in conservation.

Humble beginnings

Originally established in 1981, the Lapalala Wilderness Reserve is a recognised UNESCO biosphere reserve. Situated within the Waterberg region of South Africa, the reserve spans approximately 48 000 hectares of pristine land. The original school, which was launched in 1985 in a humble farmhouse within the reserve, has offered education programmes to visiting schools with a focus on biodiversity and conservation education.

After an introduction of predator species to the Lapalala Wilderness reserve, new educational, dining, and administration facilities, as well as residential accommodation, became a pressing priority. And so, a new location was discovered – a reserve in a rehabilitated bushveld alongside the Palala River, offering not only a new beginning but also the opportunity to evolve to a new level.





SUPPLIERS

Solar plant installation | Energy |
Thermodynamic hot water heating units
Energie | Bio-Mite wastewater
treatment plant Calcamite | Walkway
hardwood canopy installation Intex
Timbercraft | Paving Corobrik | Tiles Italtile
and Ceramic Foundation | Aluminium doors
& windows PG Glass Silverlakes | Lighting
Rebel Lighting | Signage Büro Comrie |
Doors The Door Group | Gas installation The
Gas Specialist | Polished concrete floors
Concrete Grinding Specialists | Furniture
Pedersen + Lennard, Houtlander, Dokter and
Misses, Neil Grantham Studio, RAW Modular
Furniture Design, Ashanti



A natural education

Right from the project's inception, the core concept of going 'off-grid' was an integral part of the school's vision. With a curriculum centred around conservation, ecology, and the safeguarding of wildlife and natural resources, it was crucial for the campus to embody these principles in its design and construction.

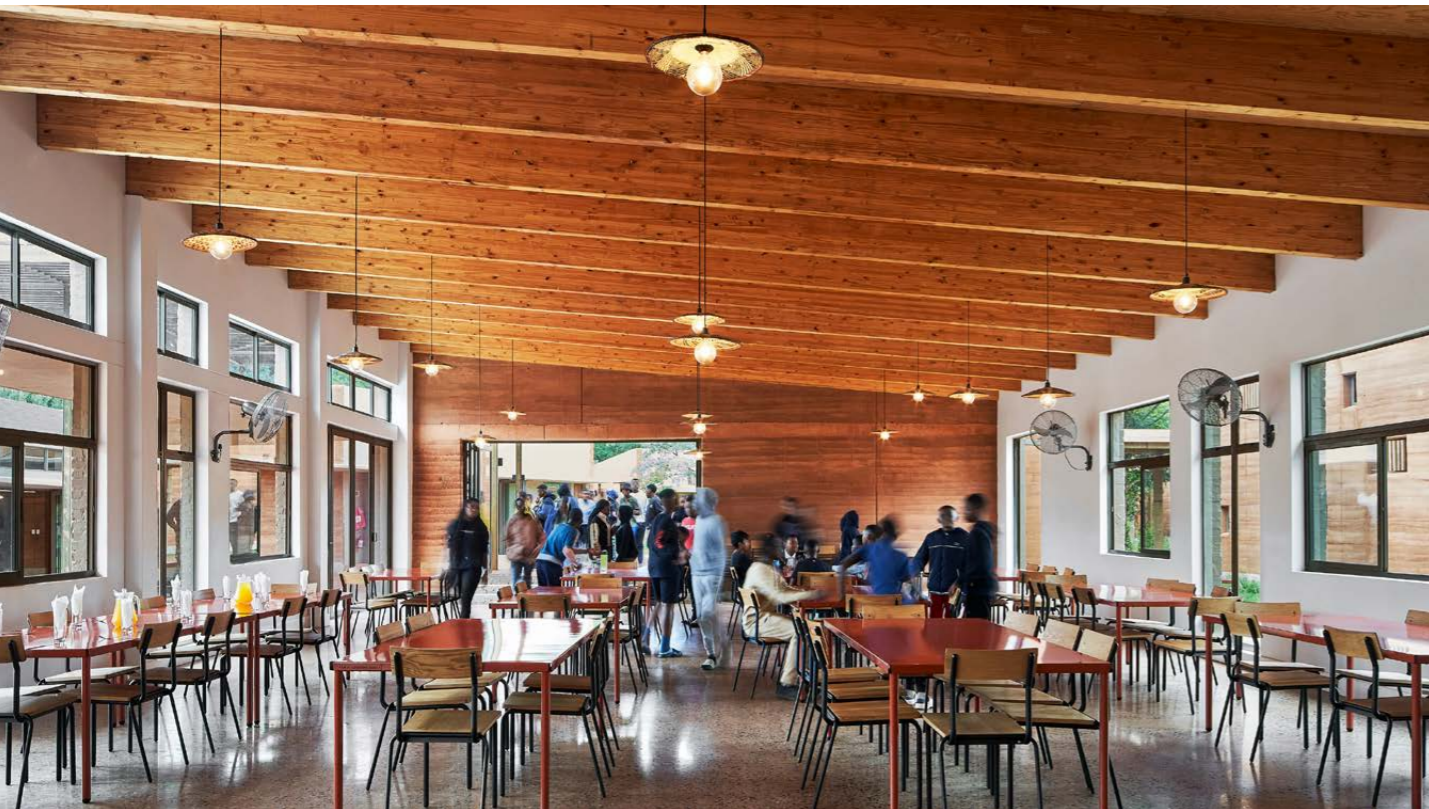
Setting itself apart from traditional educational settings, the Lapalala Wilderness School embraces a design that seamlessly integrates indoor and outdoor spaces. The educational, dining, and administration buildings are thoughtfully arranged around inviting courtyard areas. These outdoor breakout spaces provide comfortable and shaded settings for teaching. Amidst the library and offices, a Boma serves as a storytelling and stargazing space, where students gather around a crackling fire at night. These dynamic outdoor spaces not only meet educational needs but also exemplify Local Studio's enduring commitment to pioneering innovative public spaces in rural communities across South Africa.

Meticulous materials, outside and in

A standout effort is undeniably found in the project's thoughtful selection of materials. Incorporating self-excavated rammed earth, rock, timber with concrete and masonry structures, and clay brick pavers in the same striking red hues as the iron-rich rammed earth, works to unite the conscious environment.

For Local Studio, interior and exterior held equal importance to create a holistic experience and enduring environment. Meticulous attention to detail was dedicated to elements such as the sealed laminated rafters, exposed plywood ceilings, and polished concrete floors, tinged with a subtle pink hue derived from the aggregate sourced from on-site excavations. Custom-designed furniture pieces in collaboration with a group of South African designers together with a selection of hardwood and steel furniture were purposefully chosen to encourage self-sustainability as they can be maintained by the school's workshop staff.

Lapalala Wilderness School's commitment to environmental responsibility is honoured by this sustainable and engaging build by Local Studio. An example to schools across the country, this project embodies the unwavering accountability institutions should be striving towards. Despite universal challenges, Lapalala Wilderness School is proof of what determination and inspiration can achieve.



MEET THE TEAM

Architect & Principal Agent: Local Studio | Quantity Surveyor: Aestumo Avium | Structural Engineer: The Structural Workshop | Civil Engineer: Earthworkshop | Main Contractor: Mike Buyskes Construction | Civil & Plumbing Works: MLM-Ben's | Electrical Works: Bosveld Elektries | Landscaper: Gordon Kershaw | Photographers: Dirk Jacobs and Sean Gibson



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