

Under African skies

ANGAMA MARA IS A LODGE that sits high above the **MAASAI MARA** with a private access road into the reserve.
THE PROUD OWNER reflects on the first two years at the helm of this **SPECIAL PROPERTY.**

PHOTOS DOOK
PRODUCTION ANNEMARIE MEINTJES
WORDS NICKY FITZGERALD

01 Architects Silvio Rech and Lesley Carstens understand the theatre demanded by a location like this in remote Africa. The imposing figure of Maasai naturalist John Peenko perched on the roof of the vestibule adds to the drama.



“OUT FRONT, IT’S ALL ABOUT THE VIEW.”

We love!



15 years, my husband Steve and I had longed to own this remarkable piece of land on the edge of the Great Rift Valley, overlooking Kenya's abundant Maasai Mara National Reserve, the very place where *Out of Africa* was filmed 30 years ago.

After building, opening and running more than 60 safari lodges across Sub-Saharan Africa and four lodges in India's jungles, we felt that all the roads in our lives had led us to this piece of land where the views almost stop your heart.

We had just more than a year-and-a-half in which to find a name, design the corporate identity, appoint an architect, decide on how we were going to tackle the interiors, choose the best contractors, pick the very best tent maker on the continent, appoint and train staff, and greet our first guests before the 2015 high season.

Twenty years ago we built Tanzania's renowned Ngorongoro Crater Lodge in collaboration with architects Silvio Rech and Leslie Carstens. We didn't hesitate to work with them again on Angama Mara. They understand the theatre that a location like this in remote Africa demands. There is that same tension between contemporary and classic design in both the guest tents and the guest areas. The tents are beautifully proportioned, with 11 m floor-to-ceiling windows and minimal detailing, allowing the hand-crafted John Vogel furniture and the views to do all the work.

Designing the guest areas in a lodge is always the hard part – they should not be too spacious so guests rattle around but not too small either. Silvio and Les took their inspiration from the typical veranda-wrapped homes of colonial Kenya in the 1920s and designed one large room wrapped on all four sides by glass stacking doors, broken up by floor-level changes, internal colonnades and



distinctive shingle-clad roof spaces. Out front, it's all about the view. And at night the building, which appears to float on a lily pond, looks out onto softly lit Maasai brickwork.

PREVIOUS SPREAD

01 From the baraza (Swahili for a place where public gatherings are held), guests can watch hot-air balloons rising over the Mara before the sun does, and at sunset when the fire is lit they gather to swap stories.

02 The armoire at the entrance of the guest area serves as an open bar. The table is by Prabh of DuMont Enterprises in Nairobi.

THIS SPREAD

01 The open guest area offers a wraparound glass enclosure on demand. The chairs and footstools in the foreground are by John Vogel. The tables and chairs are from Fermob, and the three ottomans covered in oxblood, gold and copper metallic vinyl are by Prabh of DuMont.

02 The main lounge takes its cue from the Muthaiga Club. The leather sofas are from Klooftique; the club chairs, tray tables and marble-topped tables from Woodcharm; the dining chairs from Odds & Ends; and the plastic woven rug from Jambo.

For the interiors, VISI's Annemarie Meintjes guided, inspired and often bullied us, but in the gentlest way. Her brief was strict: no scatter cushions, no layers and no frippery anywhere. The French Fermob outdoor furniture used throughout is a safari first, and the Vogel furniture aced the Maasai character.

The creation of Angama Mara was our quest to find the perfect balance between delighting guests, making them feel comfortable and safe, and surprising them. All luxury adventure travellers in East Africa are on a journey and stay in three or four high-end lodges or mobile safari camps. Each destination should have its own distinctive signature that imbues a deep sense of place.

The Swahili word "angama" means to be suspended or hanging in mid-air, which is what it feels like up here, 300 m above the Mara Triangle, and eye to eye with raptors and the hot-air balloons that sail past each morning at dawn. **V**

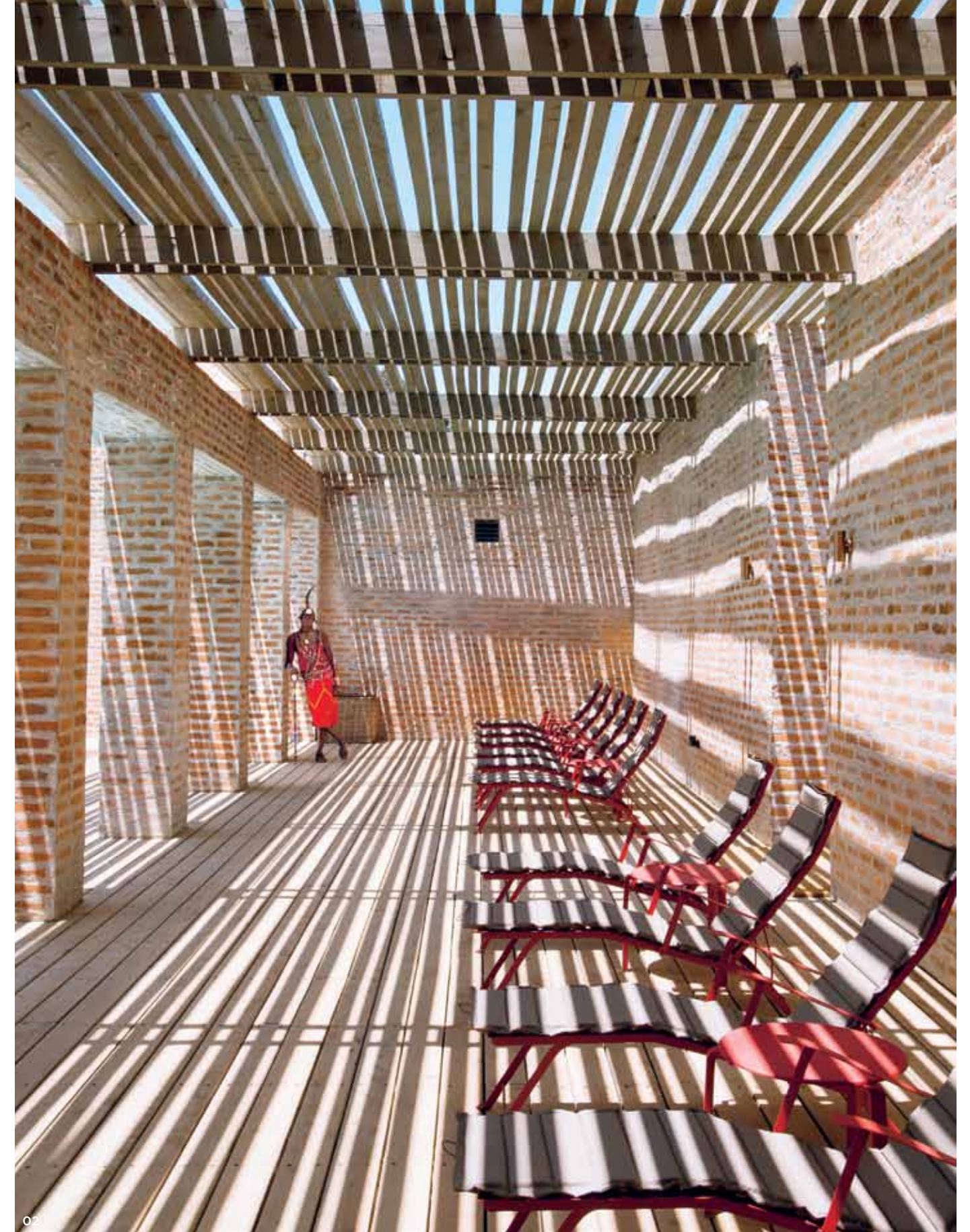
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SILVIO AND LES
TOOK THEIR INSPIRATION FROM
THE **VERANDA-WRAPPED**
HOMES TYPICAL OF
COLONIAL KENYA.



01



01 The pool pavilion, which links the North and South camps, houses a high-tech gym, a pool, a shop, a map room where you settle your accounts, and a day room to freshen up after a safari or swim.

02 All the outdoor furniture is from the Fermob Luxembourg collection, designed in 1923 for the Luxembourg gardens in Paris and in keeping with the Karen Blixen/Denys Finch Hatton era, which underpins Angama Mara's design ethos.



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01 This nook at the far end of the guest area is fitted out in an updated version of what was around in the Denys Finch Hatton days. The oxblood leather sofas are from Klooftique; the copper and brass tables, butterfly chairs and suspension bullet lights are from Weylandts; and the round velvet rug is from Heriz Gallery.

The copper up and down lights, fitted throughout the lodge, were custom-made by Copperwares in Harare.

02 The rocking chairs on the deck of the guest tents are from the Fermob Luxembourg collection.



02

THERE IS THAT SAME TENSION
BETWEEN **CONTEMPORARY**
AND **CLASSIC DESIGN**
IN BOTH THE GUEST TENTS
AND THE GUEST AREAS.

01 The bed, the side tables, the chair and footstool, and the Maasai/Gaultier-corset-inspired room divider are by John Vogel. The sofa, flanked by Dokter & Misses side tables, is by Woodcharm. The bath was custom-made for Angama Mara by Antique Bathrooms and the small table with its double top is by Fermob. The mirror that mimics the shape of a car's rear-view mirror is by Techpro in Nairobi. And lights allowing you to read anywhere with ease, without lighting up the Mara! Standard lights from Heathfield in London and suspension lights by Copperwares in Harare. The standard lights are from Heathfield in London and the suspension lights by Copperwares in Harare. The hand-knitted rug is from Heriz Gallery in Johannesburg.

