

Jewels *in the heart of the city*

Supported by businesses that have been part of the scene for over a century, Windhoek's inner city has always reflected the best of each era

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The 2008 Shining Light Award was won by goldsmith Birgit Hasenöhrl for Crossing Bridges

Windhoek is unlike other African cities. In truth, it differs from cities anywhere else in the world. Visitors remark that it is the cleanest city in Africa. Some say it is a city in the bush. You come round a bend, or over a hill, and there it is. Absent are the telltale signs of heavy industry, shunting yards and factories that normally lead you into a city. One moment you're driving along one of the four main arteries into town, mesmerised by the fluffy blooms on seemingly lifeless thorn trees next to the road, and the next you stop at a traffic light and voilà—you're in Windhoek. Namibia's capital is special because the city centre bustles and grows, changes and develops and keeps up with the times. But there is order. There's no sign of slow decay, or the stark and sometimes disturbing contrast between new and flashy and old and dilapidated, which is the case in many African cities.

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It is the firm grip of the city council of Windhoek and charismatic Mayor Matthew Shikongo that inspires local business to invest and re-invest. “When we celebrated our 100-year presence in Windhoek’s main street in 2006, we promised the Mayor that we would not abandon Independence Avenue,” says Rolf Adrian, standing in his resplendent new Adrian & Meyer shop on the corner of one of the oldest intersections in town. The new venue is part of the newly renovated Carl List building, now called Alexander Forbes House.

It is obvious why Rolf is passionate about the heart of Windhoek. “There is a vibe in the inner city that is not found in a shopping mall.” Tourists love Windhoek’s inner city he says, as we watch a group of elderly German visitors following their guide across the intersection. “We believe in this position. We want to stay in the heart of the city, because Windhoek is different. Global trends do not necessarily apply here.”

More than a hundred years ago, in 1906, when Wilhelm Meyer founded his business in the dusty main street of the capital, Namibia was a German colony, Deutsch Südwest-Afrika. A century later, the name Meyer still graces prominent shop fronts in the main street, except that the tree-lined thoroughfare is now called Independence Avenue, and it is no longer dusty. Beautiful buildings from the colonial time stand next to renovated and spruced-up sixties designs, or others typical of the seventies, next to inspired high-rise buildings bearing testimony to the stability and economic growth of the post-independence era.



Above Adrian & Meyer staff in front of their new shop in the Werner List passage leading off Independence Avenue. The Olthaver & List Group of Companies has invested N\$70 million to create additional office and retail space in what is now called Alexander Forbes House



Above Goldsmith Gunhild Voigt received the 2009 Shining Light Award for her entry Lucky Beans (see contents page), a necklace with diamonds set in gold which graces a billboard in the window of Adrian & Meyer’s new shop in the centre of Windhoek



Above Apprentice Isak Wombulu watches goldsmith Birgit Hasenöhr, recipient of the 2008 Shining Light Award (see opposite). Adrian & Meyer provides up to three training positions each year for Namibians to achieve a final Artisan Diploma with official endorsement





The business that Wilhelm Meyer started more than a century ago still graces Windhoek's main street with contemporary elegance. Master jeweller Rolf Adrian and his wife Oda continually provide skills training and invest in state-of-the-art equipment. Rolf is the chairman of JASSONA—the Jewellery Association founded after independence (1990)



Says Rolf Adrian, custodian of the name and owner of Adrian & Meyer, "Over the past hundred years, the name on the shop front has moved up and down and east

along the main street, but never out..." Through the cleverly designed, transparent shop front, some of Windhoek's most famous landmarks are strikingly etched against a pale spring sky—the new Freedom Museum, still partly covered in scaffolding, taller than any structures from previous eras, standing guard over the historic Christuskirche on the hill; the imposing Supreme Court, appearing less formal with its garden of indigenous thorn trees in full spring splendour; the shady Zoo Park, also decked out in bright spring colours, but still featuring exotic trees from another era; the street vendors under palm trees selling crafts from all corners of Namibia; and the latest, biggest and most ambitious hotel, still under construction. On the street visitors mingle with Namibia's multi-cultural society, some in traditional dress, others hurrying past in formal business suits, dressed in

the latest high-street fashions. One aspect that has not changed through the ages is the friendly nature of Namibians. It's no wonder Namibia is hailed as the smile on the face of Africa.



FACTS ABOUT JASSONA



The Jeweller's Association of Namibia was established twenty years ago as an umbrella organisation to represent and lobby for the interests of the jewellery sector in the Namibian economy. JASSONA members established a Vocational Training Board and developed a training programme for apprentice goldsmiths through which 25 apprentices have since qualified.

The association is an active member of the Diamond Board of Namibia and lobbied to enable Namibian jewellers to buy locally mined, cut and polished diamonds. Ten years ago there was only one diamond-processing company in Namibia. Today there are eleven.

Because of JASSONA's intervention, tourists can claim back VAT, paid out in cash at Hosea Kutako International Airport