

The pretty and gritty of design

 By Jessica Taylor

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Design is all about satisfaction and solutions, and for Cape Town in 2014 it was all about catering for the man on the street. Design has the ability to make everyday life better. It's about the pretty and gritty...



I couldn't have said it better myself. That's why I decided to Q&A Priscilla Urquhart, PR and Media Manager WDC2014 on what Cape Town as World Design Capital 2014 meant for design in the city and the future of design in South Africa, both locally and internationally.

In retrospect, what did WDC mean for Cape Town?

What WDC has highlighted is the non-traditional element of design that is related specifically to the Cape Town/South African context; this is design with social impact (transformative design). There has been an unashamed bias in the programme towards ideas, innovations, organisations and systems that have social impact. This means that in general people are seeing the definition of design broadened, beginning to see that the opportunity lies in products plus, and most importantly, starting to understand that they can be active participants in the design process, either as inventor, collaborator and/or user. An active, engaged citizenry in a process of design is a key aspect of legacy for WDC 2014.

There are too many to mention, but if you had to shortlist the most successful designers, initiatives, events, etc., who/what were those that either affected positive change or made a difference in some way?

Open Design; Guild; the collaboration between UCT's Built Environment and the Department of Transport's Future Foreshore; and Ikhayalami's project: *Community-led special design for informal settlements*. Not forgetting the rapid flourishing of urban food gardens in Gugulethu (EduPeg), Khayelitsha (Moya we Khaya Peace Gardens), Philippi (FoodPods), and the CBD (Oranjezicht City Farm), to name just a few. The WDC Design Policy Conference, a first for South Africa, was also a game changer for 2014.

▣ ***What were some of the major challenges faced during 2014?***

Different national contexts have called for different approaches and policies to encourage companies and governments to use design more strategically but have been met with a variety of barriers, most commonly a lack of understanding of the benefits of design. Design thinking can definitely benefit cities by understanding the context and determining what needs to be changed.

▣ ***What makes you most proud of Cape Town's local design specifically?***

WDC 2014 has provided a platform for the design community to network and collaborate. It has created employment and in turn helped economic development. The title has shone a spotlight on both existing and up-and-coming designers, creating maximum exposure and providing a platform whereby designers can partake on an international level.

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