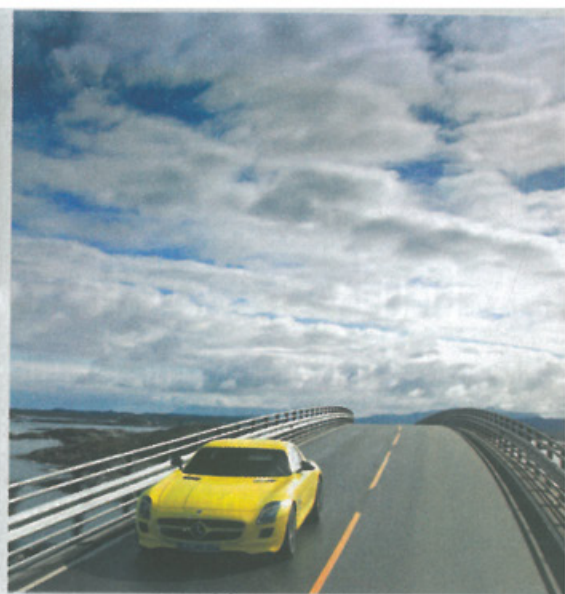


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# SA in 2011

YOUR **ESSENTIAL GUIDE**  
TO THE YEAR AHEAD

## DESIGN

## A fresh identity

ZAHIRA ASMAL

**T**he 2010 World Cup, it seems, is already being thought of as mere history — an event that took place in an exceptional month, rather than a platform for the future.

In terms of design, however, the World Cup meant a great deal to SA. And by design, I mean more than just logos and *haute couture*. Architecture, directional signage, urban planning: these are all designed artefacts.

In 2010, for the first time in many years, citizens began to consider urban spaces in new ways. Locals stepped out onto the streets, rubbed shoulders with the world, and were energised by the experience. The “ghetto infrastructure” — where we stick to patterned ways of city usage — was transformed.

We discovered new neighbourhoods. We shifted mind-sets.

So why stop now?

In June and July of 2010, we caught a glimpse of a fresh SA identity; bold, bright, unencumbered.

A global audience saw images of this country that had little to do with the Big Five, and even less with race. The Johannesburg skyline is now as iconic as Table Mountain.

Visitors arrived in our urban centres and, instead of heading for the savannahs, they stayed.

This “new urbanism” also allowed SA to show off its creative credentials. This country can lay claim to some truly outstanding talent: architects, designers, communicators. We now

need to build on this “newness”.

Stadiums and railways should not be the end of the line, but the start of a movement that accelerates designed thinking. In future, design should be fundamentally integrated into development solutions.

Government, municipalities, architects, creative gurus, and tourism campaigners worked together relatively cohesively. And, as a country, we delivered; and we can do so again.

Why can't design be part of social upliftment projects or even smart fiscal planning? In a country such as ours, design should in fact be synonymous with development.

In transport, in health care, and from our urban spaces to the products we use, conscious design can change how we work and the way we think of ourselves as a people.

Is this overstating the case? It's hard to see how.

Let's take just one example from the World Cup. In the Western Cape, the department of health created a completely self-contained mobile medical unit for the event. Led by Dr Wayne Smith, the unit was manufactured in time for the kickoff — but has countless future applications. It's flexible, affordable, and revolutionary.

In short, it was good design.

Interaction with a range of talented individuals, both locally and internationally, has made it more and more evident that design can solve fundamental problems. And design is not the pretty stuff that makes an idea

look good. It *is* the idea.

The year 2011 should be the one in which investment in creativity, through education and mentorship, is encouraged.

Design inherently entices and engages — it's a way of informing people of our success and achievements in a real way.

How do we connect with the rest of Africa? How do we improve service delivery? How do we use our award-winning creativity to encourage job creation? These are the kinds of design stories we can expect to hear more about.

Future projects include the building of fraternal bridges with Brazil. By sharing our World Cup knowledge and “new urbanism” with Brasilia, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, we will create links with a major trading partner that will host the next games.

Together with India and Brazil, we are part of Ibsa, an axis of three multi-ethnic and multicultural democracies that are determined to contribute to the construction of a new international architecture.

But more can be done on a local level — especially in terms of the disparity of wealth in our cities. This is an issue Brazil and SA share.

So, yes, we look forward to the 2014 World Cup. But, in 2011, we can also look forward to the improved integration of design, urbanism and development. ■

□ *Asmal is director of Designing South Africa*