



Game Changer

The new pavilion at Country Club Johannesburg has transformed the way its members use the establishment, and updated the institution's somewhat stuffy image.

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Among the overblown roses, the squash courts and the old gents ruminating over their corporate glory days, the Country Club Johannesburg's new pavilion - an undulating extension that covers the club's outdoor restaurant and bar - has done a lot more than offer shelter from Highveld sun and storms. It's got outsiders talking and members hustling for a table under it on a Friday evening, so they can sip good Chenin Blanc in cool surroundings while their offspring run wild on the lawns below.

Not so long ago, this was a sun-weathered, bumpy bricked terrace, dotted with clunky wrought-iron furniture and shaded by an ancient oak tree. Then architect Vedhant Maharaj and his Rebel Base Collective got involved. The young designer is a club member who cares deeply about the institution, but is just as ardent about his profession. He's worked extensively in heritage architecture and, as he puts it, "It's never been my approach to replicate

what's old - it's more of a conversation of what's new with the old." This is a prime example.

Parts of the building date back to the club's opening in 1906. There were other additions, but the most recognisable is undoubtedly the Art Deco-style frontage built in the 1960s - ship's balustrade details included. Despite this new intervention, it's still very much evident. "We've tied back to that façade: we have the big windows that show off the Art Deco details, and the roof sits above the old frontage, so you can see it all," says Vedhant.

His 10.5m addition was prefabricated off site and installed with minimal unsettling of the space. It sits lightly on the site, but nevertheless makes an impressive statement about an establishment shaking things up. And the oak is still there - Vedhant and his team cut a huge hole in their pavilion to make space for the venerable old gal. So she's part of the new wave too.
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