

GREEN DAYS

The words "investment holding company" generally conjure up images of dull men in grey suits. But this couldn't be further from the truth at the 4Di Group's new offices in Cape Town...

PHOTOS MICKY HOYLE PRODUCTION SUMIEN BRINK WORDS MALIBONGWE TYILO



THE MOST EYE-CATCHING FEATURE OF THE ENTIRE OFFICE IS THE HANGING GARDEN, COMPRISING 48 POT PLANTS, HANGING UPSIDE DOWN...

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hen Nicola Hobson and Hayley Dickson of Bone Interior Design Studio got the brief to redesign the offices of the 4Di Group, they were challenged to create an innovative, fresh and fun space to match the company's character – a place to reward the employees for all their hard work.

The 4Di Group is a Cape Town-based investment company that focuses on the technology landscape, with businesses in the software, internet and mobile sectors. In simple terms, if you think you're sitting on the next best technology or software idea, these are the guys to call. Thanks to Nicola and Hayley, should you score a meeting at their offices, a titillation of the senses is guaranteed.

The design aesthetic provides a stylish welcome from the moment you step into the reception area. Look up and you'll notice a slatted-timber ceiling, painted white, with recessed LED-strip lighting that curves down onto the wall and behind the reception desk. The desk itself is made of bricks that have been laid out in a herringbone pattern and also painted white.

The most eye-catching feature of the entire office is the hanging garden, just past reception on the way to the offices. Comprising 48 pot plants, hanging upside down, the garden creates the feeling that

you're looking at a living, breathing wall suspended from the roof. Besides their obvious beauty, plants are known to benefit work environments by decreasing stress and increasing productivity.

Just past the plants, you'll arrive at what Nicola and Hayley refer to as "the big black box", the boardroom elevated on a mezzanine. It's labeled "bored room" on the door, a nod to a staff inside joke, and has a fishbowl feel, due to its large glass window and raised height. But, there are curtains and blinds, should you need privacy.

While "wow" moments abound, where the design really excels is in its incorporation of the small details that infuse humour and personality into space. For example, the phrase "Chill. But don't freeze" is stuck on the wall of the pause area in large black vinyl letters (in a sans serif font, of course). To the left of that are little vinyl cut-outs of the silhouettes of all the staff members dancing in a line, acknowledging everybody's place within the company.

And despite the visual feast, the office is the home of an established company, with a corporate brand identity to uphold. Yes, fresh and new is great, but clever change means being able to bring in newness without completely ruining a solid foundation. To that end, Bone made clever and considered use of the company's corporate colour, green, throughout. Whether it's the hanging garden, the lime-coloured chairs, the acid-green cushions or a surprise neon-green desk drawer in an

otherwise-white unit, green pops up everywhere without ever overwhelming the senses.

The world has changed and so, too, has the way people work. It's crucial for companies, in whatever field of work, to embrace their employees' desire for creativity, for personality. So many of us do, after all, spend an average of eight hours each day at the office. It's quite amazing how a bit of humour and well-considered visual stimulation can lift the spirits and improve the quality of those eight hours. **V**

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PREVIOUS SPREAD

01 The graded green wall, using 4Di's logo pantone as base colour, creates a contrast for the yellow stools by Upstart Office and customised table by Overberg Joinery Works.

02 Nicola Hobson and Hayley Dickson, of Bone Interior Design Studio.

THIS SPREAD

02 Upside-down hanging pot plants installed and maintained by Bidvest Execuflora, is the "greenest" feature in the office, quite literally turning the standardised corporate office pot plant on its head.





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- 01** The raised black 'boredroom' creates a stage to play (or work) and has eyes on the rest of the open-plan office. Desks screens and drawers by Ergoform add punches of green.
- 02** Sandblasted vinyl on the office glazing doubles as a privacy screen and also a writing surface.
- 03** Executive glass offices with white and sandblasted vinyl for privacy and impromptu brainstorming sessions. MD Justin Stanford shows how it's done.
- 04** Receptionist Shirley Ngxabane stands behind the herringbone-brick reception desk. The slatted white curved ceiling creates a clean canvas.
- 05** Sprayed barn doors in lieu of typical glass swing doors enhance the non-corporate feel.
- 06** The "small white mod pod" in contrast to the "big black box" is a secondary meeting room, with white epoxy floors and Eames-esque chairs by Upstart Office.
- 07** Vinyl timber flooring by Sea Point Florstore, a retro-looking server and white Eames-esque boardroom chairs imbue a sense of calm that is offset by three quirky green chairs – a reminder that boredrooms need not be stiff.



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CHILL.

BUT

DON'T

FREEZE

01 Chairman Erik van Vlaanderen's catchphrase is marked in vinyl on the breakout wall. The couch is by DAG Exclusive Furniture.

02 Vinyl silhouettes by Ukwenza Design show employees dancing on the edge of traditional corporate lines.



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