

Lenox building: Hub for artist residency, boutique hotel

Memorist, a division of the Mobilitas group dedicated to heritage preservation, has joined hands with IFAS and the Embassy of France in South Africa for a meeting of minds which has seen the French ambassador to South Africa, Lesotho, and Malawi, David Martinon, alongside Sophie Taïeb, Memorist's director of corporate development, signing of an official letter of commitment and solidifying their collaborative efforts towards establishing an artists' residency in the vibrant city of Cape Town.



Source: Supplied. Rendering.

This unique collaborative project will provide a creative haven for up to nine artists annually, drawn from talent spanning South Africa, the continent at large and France.

The residency aims to serve as a platform for artistic expression and exhibition, in alignment with France's dedication to supporting local communities, fostering cross-cultural dialogues, and nurturing creative talent.

The project has been consciously placed in the heart of the cultural centre of Cape Town as a way to ensure the artists and researchers taking part are immersed and feel connected during their residency.

The Lenox, an historic building in Gardens dating back to 1929 has been selected as the location for this groundbreaking multi-use space which will comprise both artist residency and boutique hotel elements – a fitting choice, being an icon within Cape Town's urban landscape and originally built as a hotel.

“We first looked at this property 10 years ago, and waited for it to come on the market,” says Eddie Horn, group facility and property manager at Mobilitas.

“The overall project will be imbued with SA art, culture and craft – we envision it as a place for artistic expression and a meeting place for local people,” says Sophie Taïeb, director of corporate development for Memorist.



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The organisation has some background working with South African cultural institutions such as Iziko and the Nelson Mandela Museum, and this will build on the strength of its work and relationships in the country.

“This is the first such residency we’re establishing in Africa, we’re very excited about the possibility of creating a modern, cultural experience within an historic environment,” says David Martinon, the ambassador of France to South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi.

Also announced at the briefing was news that Newmark Hotels & Reserves will be coming on board as the operator. Newmark, who had earmarked The Lenox a decade ago as a possible future site is excited about the huge prospect and potential this project poses.

Redefining hospitality at Newmark

Newmark, a brand that prides itself on its authenticity and bespoke hospitality experiences was drawn to this proposition, for the value it will add to its portfolio.

“Our guests travel with purpose and this will be a uniquely immersive experience,” says Carl Haller, new business developer at Newmark. “The guests will be able to interact with the artists, artists will be able to meet guests and display their art and work in the public areas.”

Slated for completion in mid 2026, the reimagining of this Cape Town landmark will require a complete rebuild – whereby it will be gutted and reimagined in consultation with a heritage consultant.

In its final form, an entire floor will be dedicated into an artists’ residency, divided into three modular studios – adaptable to the needs of the artists themselves. The reception and communal hotel spaces will also serve as exhibition spaces for the their work.

“This kind of project is typically gradual – it takes time to establish a brand and attract artists, but we are hopeful that we can create a successful programme here quickly. ” adds Martinon.

Given the unique concept and purpose of the space, it will no doubt take shape and develop a character all its own.

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