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# Four Points

by Sheraton, Hurlingham

**W**ith a Bachelor's degree in architecture and a keen eye for materiality and design, interior designer Balkaran Bassan of Areen Design, has a uniquely integrative approach. His experience of and interest in world cultures has enriched his design aesthetic and his understanding of client briefs has strengthened his ability to create diverse and engaging interiors.

Balkaran has recently been involved with a significant refurbishment project on Four Points by Sheraton, Hurlingham. He has kindly shared details of the project with Premier Hospitality International.

**Hi, Balkaran, thank you for taking the time to speak to Premier Hospitality International. Please tell us a little about how you became involved with the project.**

"Areen Design had been working on the sister property of this hotel, the Four Points by Sheraton Nairobi Airport. In Nairobi, the opportunity presented was to ensure the new interiors met the exacting standard of the Four Points by Sheraton brand. However, we also wanted to ensure local heritage and culture are reflected in the various design routes selected, especially within the public spaces. From initial creative concepts through design development and site supervision, we worked closely with our client and other consultants to achieve this balance.

"Following the success of the designs for the Public Areas of the airport hotel, we were invited to review the Hurlingham property. The client liked our ideas and we were then invited to quickly develop them, creating interiors which respected the Four Points by Sheraton brand and make the hotel more appealing to its guests."

**What was the design brief you were given and was it followed closely or were you given the opportunity to enhance or alter it?**

"As with any Four Points by Sheraton property, the brief is an amalgamation of brand, functionality, locational context, and an international aesthetic. Nairobi's mix of old and new, cosmopolitan and cultural as well as tremendous urban growth provide a unique context for the design of this particular hotel. All these factors were touchpoints during the design process, as well as understanding the client's vision



of a refined interior that would complement and enhance the hotel. Having worked together on the Nairobi Airport property, we had already established a great working relationship with this client, which allowed room for independent design whilst still in keeping with the client's vision."

**When did work begin on the project and when did it reach completion?**

"After receiving the PIP (Property Improvement Plan) in September last year, a preliminary design concept was presented to the client for all public areas, followed by a site visit. Design work continued on Phase I of the development until January 2017, after which construction began in March.

"The refurbished reception and conversion of the gift shop into a lobby café was completed in April, with the latter serving up some of the best cakes in town already! After the success of Phase I we are very excited about the new designs for the restaurants – Pablo's and Mezze up on the roof deck and the Level 8 Vodka Bar as part of Phase II."







**Please provide some specific design details about the building. What are the most significant features?**

“The hotel runs across seven floors, covers 96 keys and a total area of 6300 m<sup>2</sup>. One of the most significant features of the hotel is the roof top restaurant with panoramic views of Nairobi. The atmosphere up there is already fantastic and we will be enhancing the design and appeal of this restaurant as part of the second phase of the refurbishment. However, as part of the current refurbishment the most exciting challenge has been the transformation of the gift shop and lounge into a lobby café, creating a dynamic F&B outlet for the hotel as well as a new spot for guests to relax, socialise or work.

“First impressions are all important and we feel the impact this space now has on guests as they arrive at the hotel will be extremely positive. The new F&B mix and entrance lobby will enhance the welcome experience whilst also encouraging more dwelling time – an important balance to achieve.”

**Does each room maintain a set design or are there deviations between rooms?**

“Areen Design has had limited involvement with the guestroom design, apart from amendments to the headboard to accommodate Sheraton beds. In general the rooms maintain a similar design throughout with variations according to room type.”



Four Points by Sheraton Hurlingham Nairobi - Lobby reception before transformation

**What has been the biggest challenge on the project?**

“As a refurbishment, the biggest challenge has been to design around existing features so as to ensure the least impact on the guest experience throughout.”

**What has the feedback from the client been like?**

“Our client is delighted with the result. The GM, Vivek Mathur, feels that Areen Design’s concepts



have dramatically improved the hotel space and the food and beverage offering. By working closely together, deadlines were all met and he feels strongly that this design collaboration was essential. The trust shown in our performance reflects the working relationship already established with Four Points by Sheraton on the airport project. That says it all.”

**This sounds like a great project to have been involved with. What does it mean to you to work on a project like this?**

“The trust a client shows in your creative response to a design brief is fundamental. From this point forward it becomes a partnership and that is what I've personally enjoyed with our client on this project. Mutual respect and trust also allows a designer to work more efficiently and, when the programme is ambitious, then time, cost and quality criteria also have to be met, without diluting the experience you want your guests to enjoy.

“It has been exciting to work on a project in Nairobi. This city has always been one of the most prominent of East African cities, with a range of cultural, historical and social influences offering a multitude of possibilities for design interpretation, fusing together to create a dynamic new aesthetic for the Hurlingham Hotel.”



Current - Four Points Hurlingham

