



Architecture of Quoin Rock: From Fortress to Experience

The architectural story of Quoin Rock begins in 2000, at the turn of the millennium. The original wine farm was conceived as a modern, industrial structure, designed first and foremost around the technological process of winemaking. Its language was functional, robust, and confident.

Yet within this industrial logic, there was something more symbolic.

The architecture carried the presence of a fortress—almost a castle.

This could be felt in the proportions, the cornices, the window detailing, and the overall massing. The building was protective, introverted, and strong—appropriate for a place dedicated to guarding and crafting wine.

When the Gaiduk family acquired Quoin Rock in 2012, they immediately recognised the architectural strength of the original structure—but also its limitation. The estate lacked a true hospitality platform. There was no generous space for wine tasting, and no proper environment for a restaurant. The architecture spoke eloquently about production, but not yet about people.

The Architectural Vision

The central architectural challenge was clear:

to transform a production-driven, fortress-like building into a warm, welcoming, and expressive space—without losing its original character.

Because Quoin Rock stands for **craftsmanship**, the wine tasting and dining experience could never be ordinary. The architecture had to be unique, emotional, and meaningful. It had to speak—silently, but clearly.

When working with existing architecture, the building itself becomes the guide. The original structure dictated many decisions to architect and designer Yuliya Gaiduk. The fortress-like nature, the small windows, the heavy walls—all pointed to a single architectural gesture: **opening the building to the landscape.**

Opening to Simonsberg

One of the most important decisions was to open the north-west façade—towards Simonsberg Mountain and the rolling vineyard slopes. The original small windows were replaced by expansive glazing.

Block walls were carefully dismantled down to their columns. The building was opened, light was invited in, and the vineyards became part of the interior experience.

The fortress began to breathe.

Symbolism and Material Honesty

For Yuliya Gaiduk, architecture must speak through symbolism. Every material, every surface, every object must have a meaning (purpose, idea behind).

Equally important was a conscious decision:

no imported decorative elements.

Quoin Rock would celebrate local craftsmanship, local materials, and local creators.

This philosophy shaped the team.

One of the most important collaborations was with Charles Haupt, founder of Bronze Age Studio in Woodstock, Cape Town. Another key figure was Pierre Cronjé, one of Cape Town's most respected furniture makers.

Pierre Cronjé had originally designed and crafted much of the estate's furniture in 2000 — including the reception desk and tables. ***Re-involving him in the 2016 renovation created a rare architectural continuity between past and present.***

2016: The Transformation Begins

In 2016, the full renovation and redevelopment of Quoin Rock began. Two major hospitality platforms were addressed simultaneously:

- the wine tasting room,
- and the venue hall, later transformed into QUARTZ Restaurant.

Another critical architectural issue was **the main entrance**.

Originally, it was almost hidden concealed behind high plinths clad in sandstone. From the driveway, the entrance was barely visible. Functionally understandable, but experientially insufficient.

The new vision was the opposite:

the entrance had to be open, generous, and ceremonial.

The Entrance as a Portal.

A two-level cast concrete water feature was introduced at the main entrance. Within this water feature, rusted *Domex* steel frames were installed—standing directly in the water.

Domex steel was chosen deliberately: it rusts beautifully yet does not stain the water.

These frames form a portal—a threshold between the everyday and the extraordinary. Architecturally, they act like a stage. Emotionally, they announce that something special begins here.

The first steel frame releases a curtain of falling water, creating a living façade. Five concrete steps rise through this water sequence, followed by a timber deck that leads guests into reception.

It is an arrival ritual.

Reception: The Heart of Quoin Rock

Inside, symbolism becomes even more deliberate.

On the left wall, a sculptural installation of three-layered French oak panels reveals the silhouette of Simonsberg Mountain—the very landscape visible through the glazing.

Pierre Cronjé used aged, rustic French oak to give the wall depth, texture, and time.

Behind this, textured granite with white veining was introduced—evoking clouds moving across the sky.

At the centre of the double-volume reception space stands its emotional core:

a 5.5-metre bronze sculpture of a vine, created by *Charles Haupt*.

Using a special patina, the bronze appears almost alive—its colour transitioning from deep earthy browns at the base to polished gold at the top. It reflects not only the vine itself, but the journey of wine.

The sculpture is surrounded by falling water streams, forming a circular waterfall.

Hidden pipe systems were carefully routed behind the reception and warehouse spaces to allow water to flow seamlessly from ceiling to floor.

Water—constantly moving, reflecting, alive—has always been central to Yuliya Gaiduk's architecture. It animates space. It creates sound, light, and emotion. Here, it becomes the heartbeat of Quoin Rock.

Materiality and Detail

To the right, the custom-designed reception desk stands as a piece of functional sculpture. Designed by Yulia Gaiduk, it combines granite slabs and solid oak, reinforcing the philosophy of natural materials meant to be touched and felt.

Behind the desk, bottles of Quoin Rock's signature red blend appear to float in mid-air. Suspended by fine black powder-coated metal wires against a black mirror, their reflections create an illusion of weightlessness—wine as art, wine as object.

Architecture as Experience

This is not decoration.

This is architecture as storytelling.

From fortress to openness.

From production to experience.

From structure to emotion.

And this is only the beginning of the architectural story of Quoin Rock.

The Tasting Room: Architecture of Light, Movement, and Craft

When you enter the Quoin Rock Tasting Room, the first thing you notice is not an object, not a detail—but the view.

By removing the original brick and block walls, the architecture opens completely to the landscape. Frameless glass panels dissolve the boundary between inside and outside, allowing the vineyards and the slopes of Simonsberg Mountain to become part of the room itself.

This was a radical departure from the original space.

The initial tasting room was dark, enclosed, and heavy—defined by black slate flooring, small openings, and traditional, vintage-style furniture. It was functional but not inviting. That language was deliberately rejected.

Light as a Material

The transformation began from the ground up.

The original black slate tiles were removed and replaced with light-toned oak flooring. The pale oak immediately softened the space, bringing warmth, calm, and a sense of openness. Light began to travel freely through the room, reflected by natural surfaces rather than absorbed by darkness.

The palette was intentionally restrained:

light oak, off-white leather, bronze accents, and glass.

The Barrel at the Centre

At the heart of the tasting room stand two structural columns. Rather than conceal them, Yuliya Gaiduk transformed them into the architectural focus of the space.

Between these columns, she designed a bar counter inspired by a ***French oak barrel—caught in the moment of expansion, as if it might burst open. The form is dynamic, sculptural, and symbolic of fermentation and pressure.***

French oak panels shape the barrel, while handcrafted brass inlays—textured and expressive—trace its joints. These brass elements were created by Charles Haupt, while the woodwork was crafted by Pierre Cronjé. The bar counter is not a piece of furniture—it is a collaborative object of craftsmanship.

The columns themselves were clad in smoked mirror, allowing them to visually disappear. Through reflection, the centre of the room becomes lighter, larger, and more fluid.

Fermentation in Motion

Suspended above the bar counter is one of the tasting room's most distinctive features: a sculptural lighting installation designed by *Yuliya Gaiduk*.

Banded oak elements—crafted in solid wood by *Pierre Cronjé* — are arranged in a shifting, circular sequence. Hidden LED strips run behind the wooden planks, creating a soft, indirect glow.

The composition evokes a vortex, a vessel, a fermentation process in motion. Because the elements are slightly offset, the installation appears dynamic, almost rotating above the barrel below.

Together, the bar counter and the lighting form a single architectural composition—earth and air, weight and movement.

Portals of Vines

On either side of the bar counter, two passageways lead deeper into the space. These passages are framed by conceptual wooden vine installations, designed and manufactured by *Pierre Cronjé*.

Hidden LED lighting runs behind the sculptural vines, creating depth and shadow. The effect is almost theatrical—a passage through vines, a transition between spaces. Architecture becomes narrative.

Comfort as Craft

On the left side of the tasting room, banquette seating runs along the wall. The palette remains light and calm: off-white leather upholstery, soft textures, and precise proportions.

Ergonomics were essential. The banquettes were designed with a specific backrest angle to support the human body in a relaxed posture. This is seating meant for time—for conversation, tasting, and lingering.

Above the banquette, a custom-cast bronze vine branch by *Charles Haupt* stretches across the wall. Behind it, smoked mirror panels—a signature element of *Yuliya Gaiduk's* architecture—reflect light and movement, expanding the perceived volume of the room.

Here, sculpture, reflection, and comfort merge into one experience.

Furniture Designed for Time

Every table and chair in the tasting room was custom designed.

The tables are solid oak, with a distinctive criss-cross leg detail designed by *Yuliya Gaiduk* and crafted by *Pierre Cronjé*. The chairs took more than four and a half months to perfect—balancing aesthetics, structure, and comfort.

With off-white leather upholstery, sculpted backs, and solid oak armrests, the chairs are designed so guests can sit comfortably for three to four hours without fatigue.

This is furniture as craftsmanship—not decoration.

Wine, Revealed

On the right side of the tasting room, full-height glazing opens the view into the cellar. Through glass, guests can see stainless steel tanks, concrete eggs, and foudres—new equipment installed as part of the estate's technological evolution.

The experience becomes complete: you taste the wine,

you see the process,

you feel the place.

During harvest, this connection becomes even more powerful watching the Quoin Rock teamwork among the vines, just beyond the glass.

A Space That Breathes

The tasting room is intentionally light—both in colour and in spirit. White leather, pale oak, bronze accents, and glass work together to create softness, clarity, and calm.

It is a space where craftsmanship is visible,

where architecture supports experience,

and where time slows down.

This is the Quoin Rock tasting room—a place designed not only to taste wine, but to understand it.

The Venue Hall / Quartz Restaurant:

Architecture of Reflection and Future

Another key architectural chapter of Quoin Rock unfolds in what is today known as the Venue Hall, later transformed into Quartz Restaurant.

Originally, this space was a warehouse—a purely functional building used by the early Quoin Rock team for the labelling line, pallet storage, and vehicle parking. It was never intended as a hospitality platform. Yet architecturally, it occupied a critical position: when driving into Quoin Rock along the main road, this warehouse was the first building to face the visitor.

It could not remain silent.

From Warehouse to Landmark

When the space was analysed in 2016, its proportions immediately suggested potential.

The warehouse measured 29 metres in length, 12.5 metres in width, with wall heights of nearly 7 metres and a ceiling reaching 11 metres.

The idea emerged to transform this industrial volume into a wedding and event venue, responding to the strong demand in Stellenbosch—one of South Africa's most sought-after wedding destinations.

A careful study of surrounding wine estates revealed a gap: many existing venues were under-equipped—dark interiors, raw concrete floors, cracked surfaces, limited technical infrastructure, no air-conditioning, no professional sound systems.

Quoin Rock chose a different path.

The goal was to create a fully equipped, light-filled, refined space—a venue that felt intentional, elegant, and complete.

Opening to Nature

The first architectural gesture was decisive.

The north-west façade was opened entirely towards the surrounding landscape.

Brick walls were demolished, while the existing structural columns were preserved. However, once the walls were removed, it became clear that the original concrete columns had lost structural integrity.

A difficult but correct decision followed: the concrete columns were replaced with 400 x 400 mm steel I-beams. This delayed construction by a month—but it clarified the architectural language.

From that point on, the project embraced a clear principle:

existing structure remains concrete, brick, and mass,

new interventions are expressed in steel and glass.

This honest contrast allowed the old and the new to coexist clearly and elegantly.

Light as Transformation

The interior transformation continued with the flooring. Instead of concrete or epoxy, the team chose large-format beige marble tiles—soft in colour, subtly textured, and warm underfoot.

The result was unexpected: many guests believed the floor to be timber, simply because of its softness and warmth. One mother of the bride famously asked whether the floor was wood.

Walls were painted white, while the glazed north-west façade flooded the interior with sunlight. The space transformed from dark and introverted into uplifted, luminous, and generously filled with daylight throughout the day.

Functional Elements as Design

Opposite the main entrance, two industrial kitchen doors needed to be concealed from guests. Rather than hide them conventionally, Yuliya Gaiduk designed a sculptural solution: custom metal pivot screens, often referred to as “metal curtains.”

These screens are framed in steel and clad with laser-cut panels, offering two visual identities:

one side featuring golden leaf motifs,

the other composed of charcoal-toned graphic patterns.

The panels pivot, allowing the space to transform visually depending on the event. Function became theatre.

Light as Sculpture

The crown jewel of the venue hall is its lighting.

Charles Haupt, founder of Bronze Age Studio, created monumental brass chandeliers spanning nearly six metres each. Industrial in scale yet refined in detail, they hang like constellations beneath the high ceiling.

With dimmable oversized bulbs, the chandeliers transform the atmosphere at night—glowing softly like suspended stars, echoing a starlit sky.

Fully integrated air-conditioning and a professional sound system were discreetly embedded within bulkheads, ensuring the venue was not only beautiful, but technically complete.

From Venue to Restaurant

Although designed initially for weddings and events, the space revealed another destiny. Because venues are used seasonally, it became clear that this hall could evolve into a future fine dining restaurant—a decision that would later give birth to Quartz Restaurant.

Designed to accommodate 200 guests, the venue required properly designed five-star amenities. However, the original building lacked sufficient space for bathrooms.

A bold decision was made – to extend the building.

The Extension as Signature

The western extension—approximately 11 metres long—was created exclusively for bathrooms. Yet this was never treated as a purely functional addition.

Yulia Gaiduk approached the extension as a conceptual architectural moment.

The original building had a strong profile and elegant cornice lines. Instead of copying them literally, she chose to reinterpret the silhouette in metal.

Steel ribs echoed the original roofline, extending the building westward. This new structure was clad entirely in tinted glass panels, turning it into a reflective surface.

The extension does not dominate.

It disappears.

The surrounding vineyards, sky, and landscape are mirrored on its surface. The building dissolves into nature.

This gesture became one of Quoin Rock's most recognisable architectural signatures.

Architecture as Philosophy

The famous architect Tadao Ando once said that architecture should not dominate nature—but frame it, reflect it, and allow people to experience it more deeply.

That idea lives here.

The Quartz extension does not speak loudly.

It listens.

It reflects.

It belongs.

What was once a warehouse has become a landmark.

What was once purely functional now carries meaning.

This is architecture at Quoin Rock:

***where symbolism, honesty, and craftsmanship shape the future—
without erasing the past.***