Morné Pienaar

Design Director | Head of Design | Creative Director

Architect | Urban Designer | Design Leader

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Professional Summary

Design Director with 25 years leading architecture, urban design and public realm across Africa and the Middle East. Recognized for design authorship, concept leadership and distinctive architectural narratives on complex regional programs including NEOM, OXAGON, Qiddiya, Rua Al Madinah and Cruise Saudi.

Experienced in leading teams from vision through delivery while building client relationships, design capability and studio culture.

Current Role

Jacobs, Dubai, UAE

Design Director, Architecture | 2025 – Present
Associate Director, Architecture | 2023 – 2025
Principal Architect | 2022 – 2023

Additional regional leadership roles:
Regional Technology Lead for Architecture | Regional AI Design Custodian | Autodesk FORMA Tool Steward

Senior design leader within Jacobs' Cities and Places practice in Dubai, helping strengthen a more design-led architectural culture in the Middle East. My role combines project authorship, client-facing design leadership, regional technology stewardship and studio capability building.

Selected Project Leadership

Jeddah Cruise Hub | June 2024 – March 2025

Architecture Design Principal for the concept and detailed master plan and pre-concept design of five terminal buildings for Cruise Saudi within Jeddah Bay, shaping architectural intent and placemaking narrative.

Superblock 4, Rua Al Madinah | June 2024 – Present

Architecture Design Principal for a major hospitality-led development adjacent to the Haram Plaza, leading concept narrative, architectural identity and strategic design direction within a high-profile urban setting.

Qiddiya Resort Core | 2023 – Present

Design Principal and Architecture Lead across a portfolio of civic buildings, utility architecture, welcome centres and transport hubs, crafting a coherent architectural language within the wider Qiddiya master plan.

NEOM OXAGON Port | 2022 – 2023

Architecture Design Principal for specialised port facilities and a major automated container terminal with warehouse infrastructure, providing senior architectural leadership in a highly technical environment.

Career Highlights

25 years across Africa and the Middle East

Design leadership across several major Middle East programmes

Jacobs progression: Principal Architect → Associate Director → Design Director

Founding Partner and Design Director at FEAT Architects & Urban Designers

Autodesk University speaker (San Diego, 2024) and CTBUH panelist (Dubai)

Awards include SAIA National Award of Merit and GIA Award of Merit

Selected Programmes / Clients

NEOM | OXAGON | Qiddiya |
Rua Al Madinah | Cruise Saudi |

Design Leadership Focus

Recognized for building collaborative design cultures centered on sketching, iterative critique and rapid concept development; often brought into complex projects to strengthen briefs, clarify narrative and align teams around a shared design vision.

Recognition, Speaking & Awards

SAIA National Award of Merit – Chapel of Light, 2006

GIA Award of Merit – Chapel of Light, 2005

Autodesk University speaker – San Diego, 2024

CTBUH Conference panelist – Dubai

Time, Space, Existence – Venice, 2021

AI Led Design Champion – Jacobs C+P ME, 2023

Additional Jacobs Contributions

NEOM Vault Mirage Depot | 2023 – Present

Design Principal and Senior Architectural Manager for a specialised depot and logistics interface supporting the NEOM Vault project, balancing operational complexity with design intent.

OXAGON Village Public Realm | April 2024 – December 2024

Design Principal and Architecture Lead for a large public realm package within OXAGON Village, including outdoor public space, amenities buildings, washrooms and tram / transit stations.

Recognised for shaping collaborative design cultures through workshops, sketching sessions, iterative critique and rapid concept development. Regularly engaged to redefine briefs, strengthen architectural narratives, support client alignment and build multidisciplinary teams around a shared design vision.

Practice Leadership & Previous Experience

FEAT Architects & Urban Designers — Partner | Design Director | Lead Architect | 2017 – 2021

Led a design-led architectural practice across concept development, project leadership, client engagement, business development and consultant coordination. Directed multidisciplinary projects through RIBA Stages 1–6, balancing design authorship, technical resolution and delivery discipline while positioning the practice competitively in the market.

HolmJordaan Architects & Urban Designers — Design Director | 2011 – 2017

Led medium- to large-scale public and institutional projects, combining design leadership, technical rigour and urban development thinking. Directed senior technical teams, mentored architects and maintained design quality across fast-paced civic and infrastructure-related work.

MOMA Architects & Urban Designers — Design Director | 2009 – 2011

Established MOMA Architects and Urban Designers in 2009 and grew the practice to a 10 Person Design Studio. Led complex public projects and held a design authorship agreement with HolmJordaan Architects & Urban Designers, contributing to a broader period of large-scale design leadership between 2009 and 2017.

Earlier Experience

Morné Pienaar Architect — Director | 2005 – 2009
Comrie+Wilkinson Architects & Urban Designers — Architect | 2000 – 2005

Digital & AI Leadership

Regional leadership across architectural technology, AI-assisted design, Autodesk FORMA, rapid concept generation and digital storytelling workflows.

Core Expertise

- Creative direction & design leadership
- Concept to detail design authorship
- Narrative, public realm & design culture
- Client-centric leadership & business development
- Multidisciplinary coordination & mentorship

Design Technology & Innovation

- Regional Technology Lead for Architecture
- Regional AI Design Custodian
- Autodesk FORMA Tool Steward
- AI-assisted concept design and rapid visual ideation
- Rhino / Grasshopper computational design collaboration
- Digital storytelling and design review workflows

Education & Registration

M.Arch (Prof), University of Pretoria
B.Arch (Hons), University of Pretoria
SACAP Registered Professional Architect
SAIA Registered Professional Architect