

PRESS RELEASE

## STUDIO ASHBY REDESIGNS THE ROBERTSON SMALL HOTEL, SOUTH AFRICA



London based Design Company, **Studio Ashby**, has recently completed the refurbishment of **Robertson Small**: a 10 room five star boutique hotel in Robertson, located in the Cape Winelands of South Africa.

Studio Ashby conceived the redesign of the beautifully restored Victorian Manor House – built in 1909, which comes complete with original period features including cast-iron fretwork to the veranda, intricate plasterwork and lofty grand ceilings. The Robertson Small is established as Robertson’s only five-star hotel having been routinely named among South Africa’s finest luxury country hotels since it opened its doors in 2011.

Studio Ashby took inspiration from the local scenery, including the nearby Langeberg and Riviersonderend mountain ranges, as well as the heritage of the hotel itself, with Studio Ashby’s founder and creative director **Studio Ashby** commenting:

“The architecture was the perfect scaffolding for us to hang the redesign from. The hotel had been going for some time, operating mostly at full capacity so was in need of some TLC. I’m delighted that we were selected to redesign the hotel and it was a great privilege to work with the talented and creative local designers and makers and create a hotel that better reflects the exciting things happening in design in this vibrant country. It’s a project we are immensely proud of.”

In order to foster an authentic sense of place and history in the hotel, Sophie spent a lot of time in Cape Town discovering and meeting makers, craftsmen, designers, artists and galleries. Following these meetings, the Studio's aim was to resource the project 100% locally, as Sophie stated:

"I was determined that the only thing shipped from overseas for the refurbishment, was me!"

As well as conceiving the redesign of the hotel, Studio Ashby also enhanced the entire experience of staying in the hotel and deepen its connection to the local community by introducing a deli selling local food produce and wines from the region, a cactus and herb garden in the landscaped grounds surrounding the property and a cyclical art gallery pop-up in the Manor house. Sophie also curated specific art installations and display art from the emerging local art scene of Cape Town and beyond.

Robertson Small is a particularly exciting and special project for Sophie as she grew up in the Stellenbosch winelands before moving to the UK age twelve. Sophie's mother is from Cape Town and an opportunity to spend some time and work on a project in a place that means so much to her, is a dream come true. Sophie's sister, Rose Ashby of Spring Restaurant at Somerset House in London curated the new menu for the hotel, with the focus on seasonal produce sourced in the Robertson area.

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Notes to editors:

**Studio Ashby**

Sophie Ashby is half South African, half English and grew up between Stellenbosch (Cape Town) and the UK. Her teens and schooling were spent in South West England. Sophie broadened her design vocabulary through a BA in History of Art at Leeds University, going on to study Interior Design at Parsons, The New School for Design in Manhattan, New York.

Sophie is passionate about the arts, is a Young Patron of the Royal Academy and has lectured at Central St Martins. Sophie founded her interior design & creative direction practice, Studio Ashby Ltd, in 2014 at the age of 25. Before branching out on her own, Sophie learnt her trade working for two very different interior design practices. Her first position, as an apprentice to Victoria Fairfax, a brilliantly talented, classical interior designer is where Sophie garnered her love antiques, understanding of colour and sense of proportion.

Sophie then went on to head up the interiors team at the small, creative agency Spring & Mercer where she had the opportunity to develop her own, unique, sense of style and learn about the wider responsibilities of running projects. With a long-held determination to set up her own business, Studio Ashby was born as Sophie won her first client; within weeks, one client quickly swelled to 3 and things have continued to grow, steadily from there.

Started from a laptop, with no investment and working from cafes, Studio Ashby has grown to become a team of six, with a studio in Notting Hill. Recently completed projects include a holiday house in France in Capestang, on the canal. A large penthouse in Chelsea for a young Russian family. A beach house in sunny Salcombe, Devon. A £12million apartment in the stunning new skyscraper South Bank Tower. Having created a reputation for being the 'wild card' in the development world, Sophie has

been lucky enough to work with some of the biggest players in the property industry already. Studio Ashby has recently been appointed as the interior designers for the Premier Units and Residential amenities (lounge/crèche/gym/spa/library) in development One Crown Place in Liverpool St. The scheme will complete in 2020 and the team will be working with the architects KPF and Bowler James. Studio Ashby was shortlisted for the International Interior Designer of the Year 2015.

### **Robertson Small**

Robertson Small is a luxury, off-the-beaten-track, 10-bedroom boutique, 5 star hotel in Robertson with an award winning restaurant Reubens (one of the original outposts of South African chef hero Reuben Riffel) as well as a wellness spa, wine bar and wine cellar.

Dating from the 1850s, Robertson is an old-fashioned agricultural centre in the wine heartland of South Africa, with a trim and tidy church square, a small museum, a cluster of wine shops and art gallery.