

The story behind Something Different



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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Originally from England but married to a South African, Kate Shepherd is the founding owner of design businesses; Something Different, Something Desired and Something Designed based in both Cape Town and Johannesburg.



Kate Shepherd, founding owner of design businesses; Something Different, Something Desired and Something Designed

This [#EntrepreneurMonth](#), we chat to Kate Shepherd, owner of Something Different...

■ Can you tell us a bit about Something Different?

Something Different is a design and build business focussing on the concept and infrastructure design for any environment - whether you work, play, dance, shop or live in the space - Something Different will elevate it with top creative input, concept development, design and infrastructure.

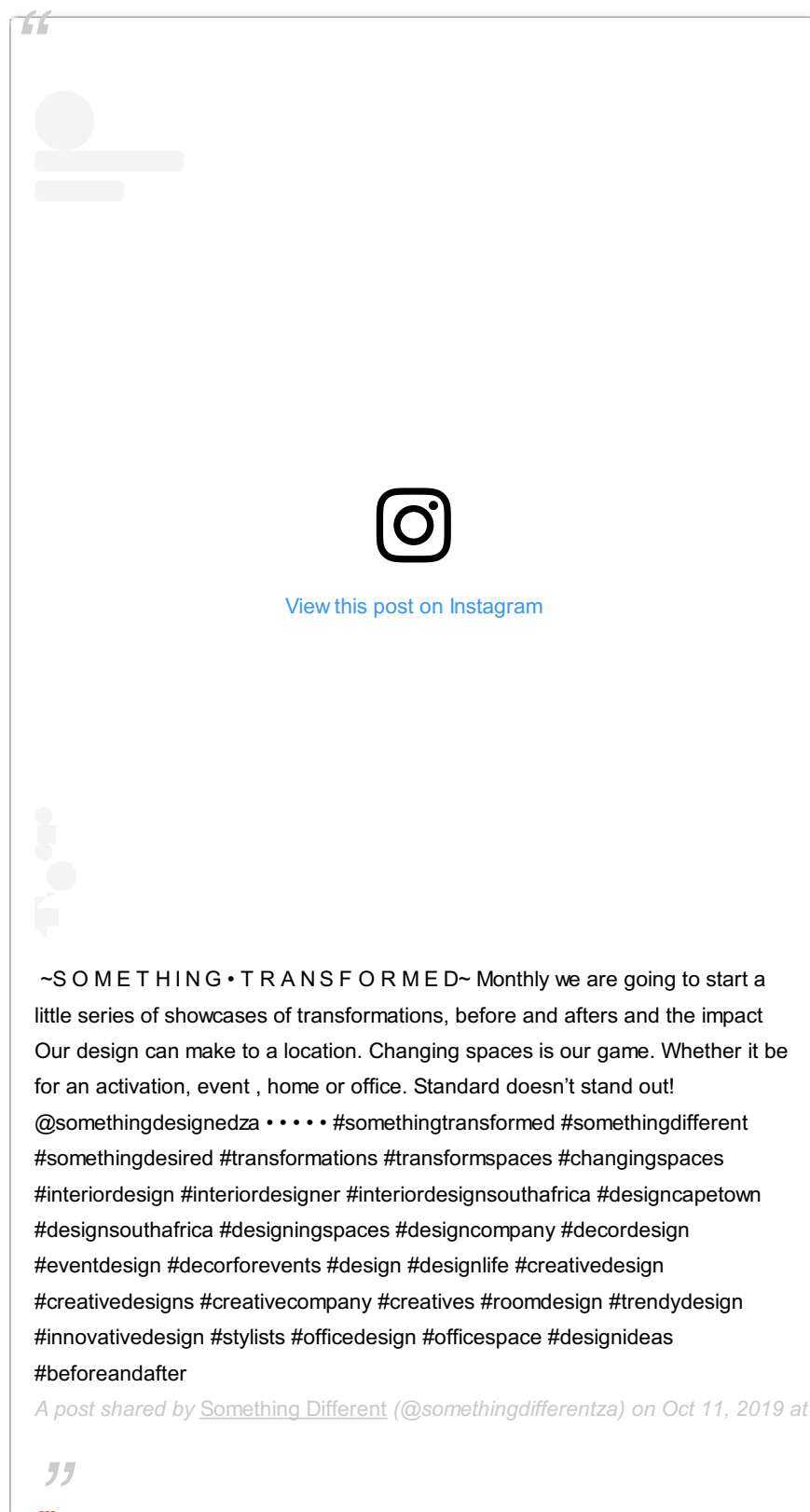
“ They Design and Build the WOW! ”

■ When, how and why did you get started?

When I was merely 18 years old, Something Different was born. I was full of ideas and suggestions and nobody wanted to try them...so I did it myself. That was a good few years ago now and from a home office and garage for storage, to the large warehouses filled to the brim of beautiful trinkets in multiple cities is just such a humbling reminder of where things began.

■ What is the core function of Something Different?

The core function is spatial design, creating environments and transforming spaces. We have various expressions of this craft from events to activations, home interiors to office design. Wherever we can dream up ideas and put them into reality, is where we thrive!



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❏ **What are some of the obstacles you've had to overcome since starting out?**

Goodness...where to begin. Really crippling obstacles have been poor staff choices and the danger that brings. Bad imitations or competitors stealing your ideas and even identity. Other obstacles include our seasonality with events and bad debtors.

❏ **What advice would you give to other aspiring entrepreneurs?**

Definitely - be authentic! Be confident in your ideas, trust yourself and don't look to the same country and industry for ideas, be your own reflection. Own your mistakes. It's how you handle the problem, not the issue that matters.

Research. Make sure you always check out what's already available, what's out there and what's already developed. Get the money in upfront – as much as you can have a strict payment policy, not everyone is as honest as you are.

■ ***What has been your proudest achievement thus far?***

That's a tough question. So many so often! Personally, being a finalist for RBAA Entrepreneur of the Year was wonderful to be recognised.

But for the business, achievements come through tackling really challenging projects with horrendous timelines and producing beautiful work. This is a monthly achievement and we all relish in these.

Also, winning pitches – this is fantastic, and more often than not we are pitching way out of our league and achieving mind-blowing results. We are awarded projects based on our creative which is what I am so proud to be known and respected for! These are all hugely proud moments for the team.

■ ***What does the future of entrepreneurship look like to you?***

I am overall very positive for the future of South Africa. I do feel that the only way this country is going to improve itself is with more future changemakers, disruptors and innovators in the entrepreneurial space.

I would encourage anyone to take the educated step forward if they feel inspired to do so. The journey is so so hard, you need to understand yourself properly, where your strengths and weaknesses lie, but mostly the market and what's out there already. Be supportive of others and support those around you. The world is a better place with more entrepreneurs in it, that future is super super bright.

■ ***What would you like to see changed in the South African startup landscape?***

I think that there needs to be more supportiveness between entrepreneurs, singing each other's praises and buying from each other's businesses. I'd love to see more diversity and more women in business and the market and landscape supporting that.

■ ***What do you believe are the traits an entrepreneur needs in order to succeed?***

Grit, Grace and Confidence.

You need to know that it's not the glamorous life but one of trial, error, winging it and pushing through the hard times. You work harder than you ever would in a 9-5 and your worry never switches off. Surviving that makes the good times feel so much better.

With all challenges come times where humbleness and gentle resolve is needed.

Finally, you need to believe in yourself and be confident in your decisions and trust the risks you take.

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~ Sultry Sensational Swings ~ Time for Pink Polo Pics!! 2019's Polo With A Purpose on 9th Nov looked truly special this year. With a celebratory feel and play on all things circular, round, spherical and triumphant. 10 years of Pink Polo and this year marks the 150th anniversary of Polo. We were fortunate enough to be trusted by our favs @valdevieevents and @pink_polo_sa to create the look and feel for this year as well as handle all infrastructure and photo moments. With so many people of high class and celeb status attending this is always a marvelous challenge and all with a super cause at heart. Here are some of the pretty swing moments for this years look and more pics to follow... •••••

#southafricandesign #decorforevents #eventdesignideas #decorideas #innovatedecor #uniquedecor #ontrenddecor #trendydesign #transformingspaces #innovativedesign #innovatedecor #floraldesign #chic #elegantdecor #decorinspiration #lovedesign #interiordesignsouthafrica #eventdesign #eventdesigners #pinkpolo #pinkpolo2019 #polowithapurpose #polosouthafrica #photomoment #photoopportunity #swing #swingphoto #polo #breastcancerawareness #breastcancerpink #pinkdecor

A post shared by Something Different (@somethingdifferentza) on Nov 14, 2019 at 7:36am PST

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📌 **Tell us about your biggest struggles as an entrepreneur, as well as some major highlights.**

We are still battling one of the most terrible bad debts we've ever had. Managing just before our “winter” season with a loss of income entering a low point of sales was so crippling and we still fight it and still chase it. The amount of energy you spend on lawyers, lawyers fees and your own time on the matter is exhausting and still not getting it in means the fight is not over.

The weather has been our enemy! Typically Cape Town/worldly weather is unpredictable. But we are still suffering a bit because of the water crisis and drought in Cape Town. Much of the tourism side of our business was put off coming to the Cape, and the corporate side of things was portrayed as not wanting to be celebrating or spending in a time of crisis.

Finally some of our biggest events/projects and achievements we have to battle the craziest storms or hurricane-force

winds to complete the project (picking up couches, bars and structures and throwing them across a polo field of Silo District). We've seen marquees torn in half, had the roofs peeled off as a can opener would, and water, floods and much more. It's the one non-constant challenge we face in all we do.

Positive wins this year would be that we have been officially operating successfully in Johannesburg for a year. This was such a crazy idea, at the last minute and the plan came together. The team is growing, we've already had to move offices due to doubling stock, warehouse and team size. The scale of events they can handle and although not short of hiccups they have managed to operate without me present 100% of the time. I see that as a great success, that our brand has got the point it speaks for itself and Something Different is not just Kate anymore. New branch comes new opportunities and it's been such a highlight.

🔴 **Why would you encourage someone to become an entrepreneur?**

I would suggest mainly to be the positive change you want to see in the world.

I don't want to sit here and say you will be a millionaire within a year and live on a yacht and not have to work. That's the dream but not always the reality.

I think it's a safe space to innovate, to grow people and this country in an optimistic way.

To grow and have a life you control but also to make others lives better by developing others.

Plus this country needs to shine, the creative, inspired, novel ideas in a place where you can succeed. This country is super open and underdeveloped so the opportunities are very vast – this gives entrepreneurs a great start compared to other continents in the world.

🔴 **Where would you like to see (company name) in the next 5 years?**

Oh we have big plans, I always struggle to express this as often we find people copy our intentions and try to do it before us – another part of being an entrepreneur is the constant battle to find your niche. So the next five years definitely see us creating some ventures and connections more into the interior space. We have been working hard on developing this the last two years and now have some people who want to partner up which could be exciting.

However, the biggest move will be to startup in London. The UK has always been part of our reach and plan. The opposing seasonality, the market for African goods and labour in a first world country, and that there really aren't many people that do what we do. Also, I'm British – and would love a connection to the UK.

Probably more of a 10-year plan we will also look to expand into Africa, the city and country have been narrowed down to two but the hustle and bustle, market place and opportunity in Africa still far outweigh Europe.

Finally, it would be developing and scaling Johannesburg to the size and optimal establishment it needs to be, lots of nurturing and team grooming, as well as the stock acquisition is needed there. The future is bright and optimistic and so very exciting!

ABOUT EVAN-LEE COURIE

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