



Wild Bean Café designer of the year 2021 Mika de Villiers: When creativity meets ambition

As a little girl growing up in Cape Town, a city where creative minds thrive, Mika de Villiers was very certain about her path from a young age. Creative expression has always been a part of Mika's life from playing the guitar, painting and doing arts and craft as a child to studying interior architectural design at one of the leading design schools in SA.

Mika recently displayed her creative talent by entering the Wild Bean Café Design-A-Cup competition in which hundreds of young talented design creatives submitted their designs for the newest Wild Bean Café cup. Her outstanding design, which was inspired by the African sun and SA's rich diversity caught the eyes of the judging panel, winning her the first prize in the competition. As the grand prize winner Mika has received a cash prize of R100 000, which she will use to study towards an honour's degree in 2022.

"I believe that everyone has a creative hair on their head. I was born into a very creative family. At school, my interest was in arts education – I really was not into subjects such as maths or science. I wanted to do pottery, painting and anything that was artsy."

When Mika was old enough to use a computer, she started playing The Sims, a life simulation video game where players create and control a virtual world, and that is where her love for design was ignited. "I would say to my parents, 'how cool would it be if I could play this game as a job?'" Knowing I wanted to pursue a creative career, , Mika considered studying graphic design until she learnt about an interior architectural design degree at Inscape Education Group and never looked back.

As many people often look at Mika with confusion when she tells them what she is studying, she often uses the following analogy, "If you take the roof of a house off and you flip the house around, anything that falls out is what the interior decorator does and the shell of the house that remains is interior architectural design."

One of Mika's biggest focus in her work is catering for people living with disabilities and strives to make her interior architectural designs inclusive. Mika is currently working on her thesis which looks at how farm-to-fork living can create mental sustainability. The thesis looks at how small-scale farming can be incorporated in residential spaces and how this creates mental sustainability. Mika also recently completed an internship at Salt Architects in Cape Town.

"This is such as male dominated industry and being the only woman in the programme was something that I had to adjust to. That really empowered me. If I could do it again, I would."

Mika has big dreams for her career and hopes that her work can allow people to experience tranquillity. "I want people to have a happy life and that is why I have incorporated mental health into my work. I am passionate about working with people and seeing how they experience being happy through the happy, practical and efficient spaces that I create." As a person that is passionate about environmental sustainability and loves animals, Mika says she wants to ensure that her work in no way brings harm to the environment or animals.

When she isn't creating happy spaces, Mika is invested in skincare and hopes to one day create her own all-inclusive skincare products. She also started a modelling career as a teenager and is currently signed to Topco Models, a modelling agency based in Cape Town. Mika says a campaign that she did for retailer Jet has been the biggest highlight of her modelling career so far. In the next five years, Mika hopes for a breakthrough in her career as an architect. She also wants to travel, inspire students and design a better world.