

'Embrace your love for design, let it fuel your motivation' - Zwelibanzi Nzuza

 By [Sindy Peters](#)

15 Jun 2023

Zwelibanzi Nzuza is a 25-year-old up-and-coming interior design student whose design philosophy is centred around the idea of wellness. His passion for the field and adventurous, fresh aesthetic saw him win Samsung's 2022 Bespoke Home Challenge.



Up-and-coming interior design student Zwelibanzi Nzuza

Looking ahead, Nzuza has his sights set on becoming one of the best designers in the world.

This Youth Month, he shares with us a bit about what excites him about interior design, his design philosophy, the challenges young people face in the industry as well as tips for those just starting out.

What sparked your initial interest in interior design?

What sparked my initial interest in interior design was watching the “Win a Home Challenge” show on SABC 3 back in 2015. The show was a South African lifestyle and reality television series which was a design competition between four interior designers.

I was so intrigued by that television series and competition, I got an idea and some understanding of what interior design is and what interior designers do. I remember how I spent most of my time just doing research about interior design after watching that show.

What excites you the most about the industry?

What excites me most about the interior design industry is how it's always evolving with the times. To some extent, I think this industry is a bit ahead of the times, but at the same time, it can effortlessly accommodate the past. To put it simply, the future and progression of interior design excites me, and this is because of three major factors which I think will play a very significant role in how people interact with living spaces.

Firstly, technology integration: smart homes and automation will become more prevalent, allowing individuals to control various aspects of their interiors through voice commands or mobile apps.

Secondly, sustainable design: with increasing environmental awareness, there will be a greater emphasis on sustainable design practices. Interior designers will incorporate eco-friendly materials, energy-efficient technologies, and sustainable practices to reduce environmental impact.

Last, and most importantly, emphasis on wellness: interior design will prioritise wellness and mental health. Designers will consider factors such as natural lighting, indoor air quality, acoustics, and ergonomic furniture to create spaces that promote physical and mental wellbeing. Relaxation zones, meditation areas, and dedicated spaces for exercise and self-care will become more common.

🎨 ***Tell us a bit about your design philosophy.***

My design philosophy is centred around the idea of wellness. As an interior designer, my goal is to create environments that support and enhance the wellbeing of their occupants.

“ I understand very well that a well-designed space can contribute to improved mood, productivity, creativity and overall quality of life. ”

I think that interior design and wellness are closely intertwined as the design of our living and working spaces can significantly impact our physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing.



Zwelibanzi Nzuza won the Samsung's 2022 Bespoke Home Challenge

■ **As the 2022 winner of Samsung's Bespoke Home Challenge, what do you think made you stand out amongst the competition?**

I think what made me stand out amongst the competition was a combination of three major factors that were constant through my design. Firstly, my design concept and how it was prevalent throughout my design - my design concept was based on the Hindu tradition and the Chakra system - Chakras are energy centres within the subtle body; there are generally seven main chakras and each chakra is believed to govern specific physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of an individual's wellbeing.

My concept was based on the heart chakra; this chakra represents love, compassion, and emotional wellbeing and is represented by the colour green. To translate and transfer this same energy into my design, I opted to use green for my cabinets throughout the space and the energy was felt.

Secondly, applying my design philosophy of wellness through my concept worked out perfectly. I had intended to create a space that would make people using it feel a sense of gratitude, love and kindness before going out into the world and when they come back from a long day at work.

Finally, what made me stand out was good design. I think the way I approached the layout, and my material selection was very good, and it shows how everything was carefully thought out and planned.



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■ **What are some of your short- and long-term career goals?**

Some of my short-term goals are to work and collaborate with other great interior designers and architects who inspire me here in South Africa and around the world.

Some of my long-term goals include becoming a creative director of the most valuable design firm in Africa, which is my

design studio, Majiya Design Studio and becoming one of the best designers in the world.



Zwelibanzi Nzuza's winning design in the 2022 Bespoke Home Challenge

■ ***What are some of the challenges young people face in breaking into the industry and how do you suggest they be overcome?***

Challenges young people face in breaking into the interior design industry include many factors.

Firstly, **building a portfolio**: establishing a strong portfolio can be difficult for young designers who have limited opportunities to work on significant projects. Without an impressive portfolio, it can be challenging to attract clients or secure employment.

Secondly, **limited experience**: young designers often lack extensive professional experience, which can make it challenging to compete with more seasoned professionals. Clients and employers may prefer designers with a proven track record and a portfolio of completed projects.

Finally, **establishing a network**: building a professional network is crucial in the interior design industry. However, for young designers just starting, it can be challenging to establish meaningful connections with industry professionals, suppliers, and potential clients. Networking events, internships, and mentorship programmes can be valuable in expanding their network.

Overcoming these challenges often requires perseverance, creativity and a strategic approach. Young designers can benefit from seeking mentorship, pursuing internships or apprenticeships to gain hands-on experience, participating in design competitions, and leveraging online platforms and social media to showcase their work and build an online presence.



Zwelibanzi Nzuza's winning design in the 2022 Bespoke Home Challenge

■ **As we celebrate Youth Month in SA, do you have any words of encouragement for those like you who starting out in the interior design space?**

To those who are starting out in the interior design space, here are some words of encouragement: remember, starting out in any industry takes time and perseverance. Be patient with yourself, stay dedicated to honing your skills and trust in your own abilities.

“ *Your journey as an interior designer is an exciting and rewarding path, filled with endless opportunities to create beautiful, functional, and meaningful spaces.* ”

Embrace your passion: Interior design is a field that thrives on passion and creativity. Embrace your love for design and let it fuel your motivation. Remember why you were drawn to interior design in the first place, and let that passion guide you through the ups and downs of your journey.

Believe in your unique vision: Each designer has a unique perspective and style. Trust in your own creative voice and vision. Embrace what sets you apart and use it as a foundation for your work. Your unique approach can attract clients who resonate with your aesthetic and perspective.

Learn continuously: The interior design industry is ever-evolving, with new trends, materials, and techniques emerging all the time. Commit to lifelong learning and stay updated with the latest industry advancements. Attend workshops, take courses, and seek out mentorship opportunities to expand your knowledge and skill set.

Start small, dream big: Remember that everyone starts somewhere. Begin by taking on smaller projects, even if they may not seem glamorous or high-profile at first. These experiences will help you build your portfolio, gain practical skills, and establish a reputation in the industry. As you grow, your opportunities will expand.



Zwelibanzi Nzuza's winning design in the 2022 Bespoke Home Challenge

■ You've been voted president for the day. What's the first thing on your to-do list?

If I was president for a day, the first and I think the most important thing in my to-do list would be to solve the South African energy crisis. I believe that South Africa's energy crisis is a complex issue that requires a multi-faceted approach. I do believe that by adopting a diversified and sustainable approach, South Africa can gradually transition to a more reliable and environmentally friendly energy system.

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