

WOMEN'S WORK

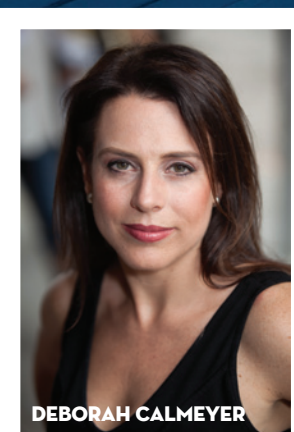
HOW WOMEN IN THE
LUXURY INDUSTRY ARE
MAKING A DIFFERENCE

words: **DANIEL SCHEFFLER**

When she was Louis Vuitton's front-woman, Angelina Jolie, famously photographed for an ad campaign by Annie Leibovich, donated her \$10 million payment to her 'Pitt-Jolie Foundation' helping community development in Cambodia. Natalie Portman relinquished her earnings from her iconic Dior lipstick ads and handed this over to the 'Free The Child Foundation'. These valiant and inspiring gestures are happening regularly throughout the luxury industries. The times are changing, and doing good has finally become synonymous with the luxury industry.

Two glamorous Manhattan women, Deborah Calmeyer and Sharon Davis, have taken their respective expertise in the luxury industries, and focused it on Africa's gentler sex. Sharon, a native South African, and Deborah, who was born in Zimbabwe, have both forged businesses that not only give back, but also make a real difference. But what stands out most about these two powerful, driven women is that they have committed themselves to inspiring women

NAMIBIA



DEBORAH CALMEYER

worldwide to achieve their goals.

LUXURY TRAVEL

Deborah Calmeyer started her luxury travel business, Roar Africa, in 2005. Besides offering guests their own African dream, Deborah, who now lives in New York, also brings awareness of eco-tourism and

conservation to the patrons of luxury.

"Safari means to journey in Swahili, but the word has been hijacked and now seems to mean wildlife", Deborah says. She believes that journeys are actually adventures of the spirit that can, and will, change the way one sees the world. For this reason, Deborah started a luxury

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ELLERMAN HOUSE



DESIGN OFFICE

travel agency that offers life-changing experiences in Africa.

“When you come from Africa, you never stop wanting to share it. You want people to experience this magnificent continent the way you know it and love it,” she explains. Deborah combines places, properties and experiences that are socially and environmentally responsible in order to offer a holistic African experience. She has also established the Roar Foundation to “recognise the responsibility to contribute to Africa’s conservation and people”. She focuses particularly on causes for women and children.

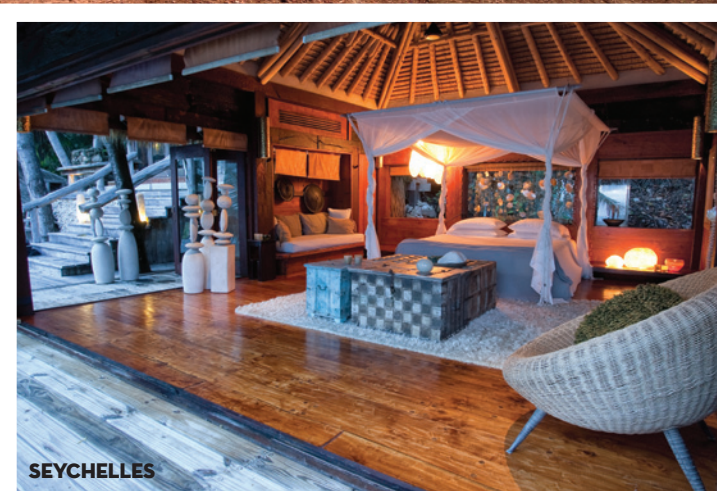
LUXURY DESIGN

Columbia University graduate Sharon Davis, who also lives in New York, has taken her award-winning design practice and elevated its focus to human-centered environments. Sharon’s diverse range of projects include everything from townhouse interiors in Manhattan to a ski lodge renovation in the Catskills and an educational center for women seeking to rebuild their lives and achieve economic independence in Rwanda.

“We pursue sustainable design solutions that improve both the way people live and



WOMEN OPPORTUNITY CENTER



SEYCHELLES



UPSTATE NY

IMAGE © ELIZABETH FELICELLA

work and the health of the natural environment,” Sharon explains. “Design is a luxury and architects with experience and access in the luxury industry, like ourselves, can use their skills to create worthwhile projects. The Women’s Opportunity Center is an excellent example – we designed the center as cost-effectively and sustainably as possible so that we could rather use the money on the program itself”.

The centre, which is based in Kayonza, Rwanda, has been designed in collaboration with the humanitarian organisation ‘Women for Women International’. Constructed as a village for vocational training and community development, it earned the 2011 World Architecture Festival Award as ‘Best Future Educational Project’. “Working on this project has changed my life”, says Sharon. This initiative has also changed the lives of many African women.

“By creating a place that is solely theirs, we have given these women a sense of self, of importance, inclusion and safety,” Sharon explains. She believes that well-intentioned donors often misunderstand the



SHARON DAVIS

IMAGE © ELIZABETH FELICELLA

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ELLERMAN HOUSE



ANTARTICA

importance of ‘place’ in changing people’s lives: “Giving money to people in need is incredibly helpful, but giving your talent and expertise (although time-consuming) is so much more rewarding, intimate and life-changing.”

For information on Deborah Calmeyer, visit roarafrika.com. To find out more about Sharon Davis, visit at sharondaviddesign.com