

farmhouse fabulous



Modern architecture meets country soul in this peaceful estate home

Words Mignon van Zyl Photos Hilton Kotze



**“EACH PIECE OF
FURNITURE HAS A STORY, MANY
FROM OUR CHILDHOODS
IN THE KAROO”**

SPACES

After working as farmers and living in somewhat dilapidated farmhouses for over 30 years, Desiree Potgieter and her husband Johan decided it was time for a more suitable home.

A stand in Zandspruit Bush & Aero Estate in Hoedspruit won their hearts for a number of reasons: it was close to both work and nature, their dogs Pumba (a 50kg Boerboel) and Mia (a Jack Russell) were welcome and they could live right next to a river. In other words, the stuff of Desiree's dreams. With the stand organised, the next step was putting pen to paper.

"A friend of mine who was also planning to build showed me a rough drawing of her dream house and I loved the idea of a house built around a courtyard," says Desiree. "I then started looking for an architect that does eco-design houses."

Her brief to Klippie du Toit of EarthSwitch Architects from Mbombela was rather straightforward: a safe and private open-plan eco-house built around a courtyard. She did not want any tiles on the floors or walls, no curtains, shower doors or anything that needed constant cleaning. She also wanted loads of light and airflow, a rim flow swimming pool, low maintenance materials such as cement (no wood), and finally, "a big stoep".

The design and building took over a year but it was worth the wait. The Potgieter's new home resembles an open-plan farmhouse with contemporary elements that subtly reveal the owners' classic and modern tastes. There are two en-suite bedrooms, a dressing room, study, open-plan kitchen, dining and sitting room, all of which open up onto a plant-filled courtyard and patio. There are also staff rooms, a splash pool and a stoep that overlooks the surrounding bush. In terms of eco-efficiency, many bio-climatic design features were considered during the build including a solar panel system and a heat pump for water heating.

Inside, high ceilings and exposed white roof trusses create a feeling of space while aiding in the cooling of each room. Slabs of concrete cover the floors while steel and glass are the predominant building materials. In certain areas glass panels cover entire walls, exposing the natural beauty of the bush behind them.

When it comes to the furniture and décor, it's clear that the Potgieter's history has conjured up a love for antiques. A vintage red kitchen scale, an industrial cashier and a perfectly preserved old piano are but a few of the collector's items that make subtle statements throughout the home. With the help of interior decorator Bianca Black of Darkie Designs, Desiree's home retains a farmhouse feel but also embraces the flair of modern architecture. "Each piece of furniture has a story, many from our childhoods in the Karoo," explains Desiree. "A side table is an old shaving table from Beaufort West and the old piano was bought by my husband at an auction in Piketberg. The green cashier comes from the now closed Langeberg tomato factory in Hoedspruit where we both worked 30 years ago. Little new furniture was bought. We just used what we had."

Paintings by Frans Martin Claerhout can be found on a few walls, while a large abstract painting by Ursula Schwartz, a self-taught South African artist now living in the USA, is a focal point in the lounge. The





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