

# MODERN



AN UNUSUAL WEEKEND HOME NEAR DULLSTROOM  
shows a sensitive yet bold approach to design.

PHOTOGRAPHS DOOK PRODUCTION ANNEMARIE MEINTJES WORDS MILA CREWE-BROWN

# MYSTIQUE



planted with 3 hectares of cherries. "I grew up here as a young boy on fishing trips," he recalls nostalgically. His yearning to create something exceptional on the same land has nagged for years.

Perched on a hillside, the structure projects into the wide open, presenting the viewer with a dramatic sequence of glass-fronted pods sculpted from raw concrete and anchored to the slope by hefty supports. Facing south, the house is shouldered by the

the waterfall in the face, in contrast with the unrefined concrete mass to which it is affixed.

Thanks to the pared-down interior and finishes such as off-shutter concrete walls that bear the marks of their making, there's little to distract from the scenic beauty. Wooden floors bring a dose of warmth to the bedrooms and zinc cladding is used externally to complement the concrete.

Over a long weekend at The Fall you might find Robyn in the library, which is

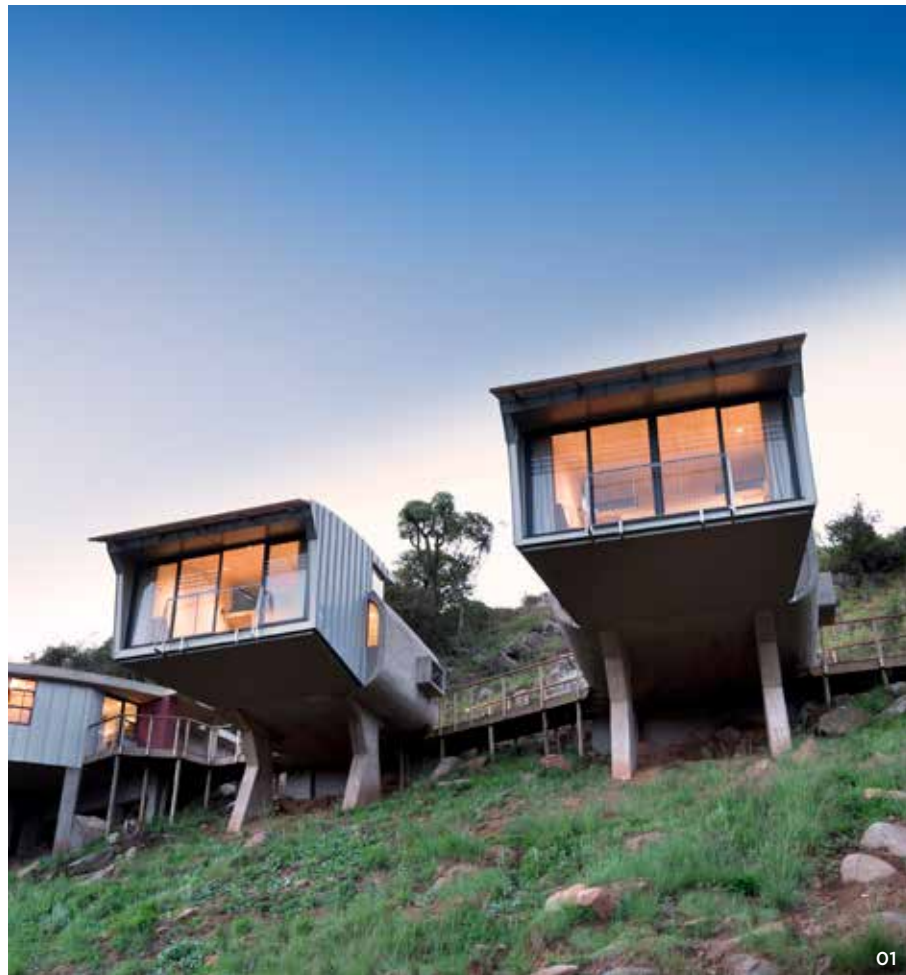
here's a defining principle in modern architecture called "truth to materials". Its aim is to celebrate the intrinsic qualities of a material without corruption, laying bare character and construction. The Fall, a weekend home outside Dullstroom, pays homage to this notion with its audacious use of concrete and its bare-bones appeal.

"A shelter that sits crouched, backed up against the steep hill with an almost animate quality," is how architect Paul Oosthuizen describes it. He says "shelter" as a throwback to his time spent studying the site, in awe of the thunderous water crashing into the gorge. The house was to be a refuge in direct

## THE VIEWER IS PRESENTED WITH A DRAMATIC SEQUENCE OF GLASS-FRONTED PODS SCULPTED FROM RAW CONCRETE.

conversation with the waterfall. "The hexahedron formation of the rock, eroded with soft edges, became a compelling navigator. I extruded these shapes out of the land; strung together like a spine, they became alive."

"I did a double take when Paul showed us his initial drawings," says owner Anthony Hare. He and his wife Robyn have since fallen in love with the house, which has stirred mixed reactions in the Dullstroom community of conventional homes. The farm has been in Anthony's family since the 1960s and is now



waterfall to the west and backed by a copse of bladdernut, dogwood and Natal bottlebrush trees, and its outlook extends across a gentle green landscape stretching to the horizon.

The home's long approach on foot is an exercise in conscious immersion. Roughly 300m of decked pathway parts the surrounding grassland, passes two guest suites and leads you up to the entrance in a slow, considered manner. Upon entering your eye is drawn by a glass box at the far end of the lounge that is suspended over the plunging gradient. It's a transparent booth that stares

crammed with novels and Africana books on discovery, and Anthony on a trout-fishing jaunt with their two sons. Time out spent far away from the city is what it's all about here.

Theirs is a home that hides little, bringing to mind art critic John Ruskin's reference to "honest and unpretending architecture". Paul has created a building that speaks to nature in more ways than many brick-and-mortar houses ever could, connecting the architecture to its site with integrity. **V**

• pauloosthuizen.co.za



### PREVIOUS SPREAD

**01** A long boardwalk leads through grassland, across the river and up the slope to the house, instilling in first-time visitors a growing sense of familiarity with the house as they approach it.

**02** "At first we challenged Anthony's insistence on the south-facing slope," says architect Paul Oosthuizen. "Together we climbed the opposite hill... and concurred that he was right. The house commands a view across the spectacular waterfall, forest and grassland in a continuous sweep."

### THIS SPREAD

**01** Paul refers to the structure as a crouched animal, a nod to his instinct to anchor himself to a rock and seek shelter when he was first introduced to the roaring fall and made sketches.

**02** The deck to the back of the house receives northern sun and as such is the best spot for al-fresco lunches. The water trough was included at the request of Robyn, who uses it to rinse freshly picked herbs for cooking.



01

THE HOUSE IS SHOULDERED BY **THE WATERFALL** TO THE WEST



04

- 01 Leading off the living room, the balcony juts out to maximise the view. The chairs are from La Grange Interiors and the table is from Weylandts.
- 02 The majority of sunlight is drawn in from the northern side with cleverly placed windows. Robyn got the bedside table for a bargain through OneDayOnly.co.za.
- 03 Curves abound in the guest suite, from the structure itself to the fittings. The bath is from Victoria + Albert Baths.
- 04 XXXXXXXXXXXXX
- 05 Robyn's wish list included a booth where she could do some work over the weekends. She now pulls a small table up to the cantilevered bench, where she can enjoy the warmth from the fireplace on cold days.

AND BACKED BY **A COPSE OF INDIGENOUS TREES.**



02



03

02



05



- 01** Generous glazing and clerestory windows facing north make the most of sunlight and offer intimate views of the climbing slope and woodland.
- 02** The entrance leads into the courtyard between the house and an indigenous forest at the back.
- 03** "Grasses and lilies were pulled, like a blanket, back over parts of the structure, claiming it as part of the hill and insulating the interior," says Paul.

THERE'S LITTLE TO DISTRACT FROM **THE SCENIC BEAUTY.**



THE HOME'S LONG APPROACH  
ON FOOT IS AN EXERCISE IN  
**CONSCIOUS IMMERSION.**

01 Paul's choices have been made with a great degree of respect for the site and its natural architecture. For example, he "pushed the living space up the slope to interact with a prominent boulder."

