

Living light

The Forest Town home of designer couple Lee-Ann Bell and Marcus Pieterse is a triumph of luxurious subtlety

text MILA CREWE-BROWN production TIAAN NAGEL photography SARAH DE PINA



CLEAN LINES, A RESTRAINED COLOUR PALETTE AND A VARIETY OF TEXTURES IN THE LIVING ROOM.



THE BEDROOM IS A CHIC YET UTTERLY RESTFUL ESCAPE.



THE VERDANT GARDEN SOFTENS THE STRONG LINES OF THE ARCHITECTURE.

FOR local designer duo Lee-Ann Bell and Marcus Pieterse, the notion of “home” was never going to be as plain and simple as a roof over their heads.

How could it be when Lee-Ann’s Greenside interiors showroom, Mezzanine, is a stylish embodiment of her love affair with design and her partner Marcus is the man behind Joburg’s eminent furniture design company, Make.

It’s a partnership that was never destined for mediocrity on the home front. Add to this star line up one of the country’s frontrunners in modern urban-centric architecture – StudioMAS – and you’ll begin to gain an understanding of what home really means to the pair. Theirs is an abode informed by an appreciation for good design and a love of mid-century and Scandinavian pieces.

“We were after an inside-outside space with a less-is-more appeal,” says Lee-Ann. Governed largely by the vacant site they purchased back in 2005, the Long House – so named by its architect, Pierre Swanepoel – fits their needs for security and timeless beauty in its elemental make up.

Owing to its modernist form and Scandi-influenced interior, the home’s cohesive design language stems from the same aesthetic roots.

Spatially, it’s minimalist and demands little interpretation from the onlooker. Characteristically StudioMAS, the building is arranged as an elongated box, with its interior open from one boundary to the other.

The ground level with its rectilinear facade of Tyrolean render [a cement-based render containing

silicone, which gives it waterproof properties and is designed to give a weathered look and uneven, often pebbled, texture] comprises the entrance, study and garage from behind a wooden slatted gate that spans the full width of the property.

“In the afternoons the sun penetrates the gate’s openings and stripes the study with slivers of light,” says Lee-Ann.

Devoted to the art of living, the capacious first floor incorporates a lounge, dining area, kitchen and scullery, with the southeastern facade entirely glazed to maximise the leafy garden views. Upstairs, the third floor is a private space consisting of a bedroom, bathroom and dressing room. The bathroom is saturated with natural light from a generous skylight, which lends the feeling of living up in the trees. As with the north-facing wall downstairs, the upper level is lit by a ribbon window.

The decor element that instantly sets the tone for the interior has to be Lee-Ann’s collection of mid-century dining chairs. “They sparked my love of vintage design,” she remarks of the set of 12 she bought for a steal at a secondhand store. Her other love – blue vintage glassware – can be seen in thoughtfully edited tableaux throughout the home.

On the living level, smooth travertine tiles reflect light from a floor-level ribbon window and rich mahogany cabinetry produced by Make conceals a fully integrated kitchen. The walls, painted in the palest shade of dove grey, display a collection of works by the couple’s favourite artists, with the likes of Claudette Schreuders, Zander Blom and Cecil Skotnes displayed