

THE PERFECT



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**A TRULY
TINY JOBURG
APARTMENT**

(only 61 m²)
provides solace
for its owner
thanks to
genius visual
trickery and
**SAVVY USE
OF SPACE.**

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PRODUCTION
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PIED-À-TERRE



"WE GET CAUGHT UP IN ALL THE EXTRANEIOUS THINGS..."

I didn't want to have a garage full of stuff I'd use one day, maybe. I want to surround myself with the things I love, because life is so short," Lesley Fox tells me as she whizzes around her kitchen, cupboards flying open to reveal a fridge, an oven, a coffee station, a washing machine... all hidden behind a wall of doors.

She has a meeting in 45 minutes and is doing her best to fit me into a hectic schedule as project manager and operational trainer for FoxBrowne Creative. The fact that she spent a total of 48 days at home last year reveals how demanding her work life is and how that lifestyle calls for a home that is as easy to manage as it is welcoming.

Lesley's apartment in one of Saxonwold's most sought-after complexes comes in at a titchy 55 m² upstairs. The word "upstairs" is used loosely, since downstairs comprises an entranceway and staircase. She has lived here since 2002 and wanted a refurb, but decided it was better if she handed the job over to someone who could offer a fresh eye.

Enter Astrid Van Der Heim, who is skilled at making a lifestyle for her clients by way of design. She took Lesley's brief and handled it with all the care in the world, answering to her need for space and honouring all the keepsakes she holds dear.

"This was a standard one-bedroom, very ordinary apartment," Astrid reflects, citing an awkward L-shaped melamine kitchen counter and click-lock flooring to paint the picture. What Lesley asked from Astrid was a glamorous and comfortable home to return to after living out of a suitcase for weeks on end, and to incorporate cherished family pieces such as a *jonkmanskas*, camphorwood screen, floral needlepoint rug and Chinese lions.

"She did two incredibly clever things," says Lesley: "one is boxing in the balustrade to make storage space, and the other is taking the wall colour right into the ceilings." The mercurial grey that Astrid chose for the walls, ceilings and window frames serves to dissolve all structural lines, essentially creating a blank canvas and tricking the eye. Against it she has thrown in an electric mix of luscious pinks and purples. The inclusion of such vivid colours, Lesley says, is a welcome change from the ubiquitous neutrality of the lodges she works in.



Taking the kitchen counter out provided more space and opened this zone up to the lounge, where Lesley now has an old trifold table as her dining area. Her television, which forms part of her work routine, has been concealed inside a shallow wall cupboard with shelves and a desk in front of it that serves as her office.

As she walks me through her apartment, pointing at things, she regales me with stories of whom this belonged to, whom that was

a gift from, and why they are meaningful to her.

"There is a reason for everything," Lesley says, with a hint of her work life coming through. "I love my home but my passion is training people, so I don't want to be fussing about my living space. Astrid has made it possible to do that." **V**

- **FoxBrowne Creative:** foxbrowne.com
- **Van Der Heim Interiors and Design:** 072 477 4400



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PREVIOUS SPREAD

- 01** Homeowner Lesley Fox, who is project manager and operational trainer at FoxBrowne Creative.
- 02** Lesley says she picked up the vintage Ercol sofa and chair for R125 rand when she was in her late 20s. Her father made her a set of tools and she scraped and sanded the wood down to the original oak. The colours introduced in velvets by Astrid match the needlepoint rug.

THIS SPREAD

- 01** Boxing in the unsightly balustrade with cladding provided the backbone for a new sequence of cupboards, used to house dry foodstuffs, pots and pans. Lesley says the dining table was stored in the laundry for years until Astrid gave it a new lease of life with a set of chairs to match. The light is from Weylands.
- 02** The decision to extend the kitchen wall meant that essential space was provided to fit in cupboards, housing within them a full standard kitchen's functions and much-needed counter space.
- 03** Lesley's "office in a cupboard" cleverly conceals her TV, files, cables and working world. A pair of lions that she brought back from Taiwan and framed Maasai neck pieces enjoy pride of place.

"I WANT TO SURROUND MYSELF WITH **THE THINGS I LOVE.**"

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- 01 The tiny bathroom works hard to create space with mirrors on the walls, a repainted chest with extra drawers and a nifty overhead rail where washing can be hung above the bath on wet days.
- 02 The landscape painting by Titta Fasciotti, a gift from Lesley's mom, depicts a scene reminiscent of her aunt's farm in the Groot Marico district. The portrait is of her great-great-great-Ouma Anton (on her mom's side), who came out to South Africa from Ireland. The bedside lamps are from Weylandts and the throw is a gift from a friend.
- 03 In the library nook is a chest of drawers that was repainted to give it new life, a chair that used to belong to an aunt of Lesley's that was reupholstered by Astrid, neat vertical shelving for books, and a print of a Moses Soyer painting of a dancer that reminds Lesley of her aunt. "Even the shells have been in the family forever."
- 04 The screen was awkward standing on the floor, says Astrid, so she hung it on the wall in a blank passage and created what they now call the "camphor corridor". She loves the thought of Lesley being reminded of her childhood every time she walks down the passage.

"I DON'T WANT TO BE FUSSING ABOUT **MY LIVING SPACE.**"



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