

LEADING-EDGE **HOME**

SERENE SPLENDOUR

A BOLD ARCHITECTURAL HOME ON THE ROODEPLAAT DAM, NORTH OF PRETORIA,
WAS DESIGNED TO BEST ADMIRE THE AWE-INSPIRING LANDSCAPE

TEXT **GRAHAM WOOD** STYLING **HEATHER BOTING** PHOTOGRAPHS **ELSA YOUNG**





Even though Isabel and Johann Cadle's home on the Roodeplaat Dam is more about looking out than being looked at, seen from the bottom of the garden over the swimming pool and lower terrace, the sleek lines and beautiful proportions of the house, are attractive in their own right. OPPOSITE Isabel takes in the spectacular view of the Roodeplaat Dam from the balcony outside the main bedroom.



The owners of this beautiful modern home with sweeping views of the Roodeplaat Dam, north of Pretoria, are passionate nature lovers. A typical Sunday morning for Isabel and Johann Cadle might involve breakfast, a quick trip to pick up the newspaper and then a game drive in the nature reserve next to the dam.

This sleek concrete-and-glass villa perched on a steep slope was built to facilitate an appreciation of its surroundings, to connect its inhabitants to the environment and to frame the views. Johan Wentzel and Grete van As of W Design Architecture Studio, who designed and built the house, wanted its owners to be almost unaware of it. It's all about looking out, not being looked at. They deliberately avoided something that would draw attention to itself.

'The lifestyle is more important than the house,' says Johan. 'It's all about the landscape, and the feeling that you are in the bush; being in a place where you are aware of the seasons, where you can see the moon – not disconnected from nature.' That, for Isabel and Johann, is the ultimate luxury, and why they sought out this site in the first place.

But that didn't stop them from embracing a modern, clean-lined aesthetic – quite the opposite. The openness and simplicity of modern houses, not to mention the wide, uninterrupted spans of ceiling you can create when working with concrete, and the way walls can be made entirely of glass, make modern architecture particularly well suited to the appreciation of natural beauty. The house itself is quite breathtaking when you walk to the bottom of the garden and look back at it, but that's as much about the visual harmony, which results from good proportions and sensitivity to its site, than an attempt to be pretty.

The Cadles' home is divided into two worlds, or realms. The upstairs wing, which follows the line of the highest part of the site, is predominantly a private area with bedrooms and bathrooms. The downstairs wing, which feels almost as if it is underground, houses the living area and kitchen. 'The living areas are down in the bush,' explains Johan, 'and the bedrooms are up in the air.'

The main bedroom has a spectacular view over the treetops and the dam, and enhances the sense that you are floating above the world. The rooms up here have been cleverly designed to



create a sense of unrestricted space and free movement. ‘You don’t go into a room, you go around a series of pods,’ explains Johan. ‘There are no dead ends.’

In the living area below, you’re nestled into the surrounding gardens. Johan points out that, compared to the grandness of the views upstairs, the living area creates a much more intimate relationship with nature.

The Cadles are exceptionally keen gardeners with a passion for indigenous plants. They planted about 500 trees to create the beautiful gardens, which blend seamlessly with the landscape. Isabel often puts out little morsels to tempt the abundant birdlife (and sometimes even bushbabies) to linger, where they can be seen from the living room almost as if from a hide.

The interiors are also an exercise in simplicity. Much like the house itself, the furnishings, while undeniably comfortable, were chosen for their ability to disappear rather than impose themselves on the space. ‘We wanted to keep it simple,’ says Isabel. While their art collection

is growing, the Cadles have not rushed to fill the walls. ‘The house asks for very special art pieces,’ she says. It can’t be forced. Besides, she says, ‘The views are the paintings.’ ◻

W Design Architecture Studio, wdas.co.za

FROM FAR LEFT The deep overhangs are designed to shelter the living area from the sun, making blinds unnecessary, so that its floor-to-ceiling glass walls provide seamless views of the garden, landscape and dam beyond; statues by Grace da Costa in a hallway overlooking the stoep are from from Art d’ Afrique (artd-afrique.co.za); the main entrance area, rather than ushering you into a room, presents spectacular views. The carpet is from ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~.





FROM FAR LEFT The patio on the lower terrace makes an excellent spot for long lazy lunches, and provides an entertainment area with easy access to the pool. The wooden table is from Sevens (sevens.co.za); Isabel in the kitchen area above the living area. The bar stools and kitchen chairs are from Comfort Creations (comfortcreations.co.za); an astro-turf-covered deck makes another viewpoint and entertainment area. The astro turf was bought at TurfScape (turfscap.co.za) and the deck chairs are from Patio Warehouse (patiowarehouse.co.za).



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Q & A WITH JOHAN WENTZEL

What is your definition of luxury? Space. With a view, even better.
What do you love most about this house? Being completely aware of the 'outside' and the natural context.
Your favourite space? This house has two personalities: the landscape that surrounds the lower level living areas and the open elevated views from the bedrooms on the upper level.
How do you define style? We're careful with 'styles' and rather focus on having a good idea or concept that drives any design decisions.
What's your favourite building? We always dream about buildings that do not exist – a place that's all about the context, the seasons, the wind, the time of day. The de Blas house in Spain by Alberto Campo Baeza is a great example.
What's a luxury you can't live without? Sunlight.
What's your most rash purchase ever? A Nespresso coffee machine.
What inspires you? Natural things; the places where many of our buildings are designed and constructed already have an amazing presence.
What is your interiors motto? Simplify and aim for 'beauty' outside time and physical space.
Pet design hate? Looking at the neighbours and considering 'conventional wisdom'.
How do you relax? Outside... on my mountainbike.
What's the most inspiring trip you've ever taken? We always find inspiration from time spent outside and love the open Karoo landscapes.

FROM FAR LEFT Not only does the main en suite bathroom have beautiful views, but it is designed so that it opens from both sides, like the other rooms in this wing, creating an unrestricted sense of space; the bedroom seen from the viewing deck, has glass barriers so that its views are not interrupted by balustrades; the main living area is sleek and comfortable, without drawing unnecessary attention to itself.