



TRUE TO FORM

TEXT MILA CREWE-BROWN PRODUCTION DEAN VAN ASWEGEN PHOTOGRAPHS ELSA YOUNG

A JOBURG HOME THAT FLIES THE FLAG FOR MODERN LIVING IS AN EXERCISE IN THREE OF ARCHITECTURE'S MOST SUPREME ELEMENTS – LIGHT, PROPORTION AND BALANCE

In many of us, the nesting instinct brings about a tendency to cocoon oneself – the need to be enveloped is answered by surrounding oneself with things. Not so for Shaun Baker, partner at George Baker Furnishing Fabrics & Wallcoverings, whose definition of home is quite different. His is a structure that sits lightly on the earth, dominated by glass and steel in a series of geometric pods that cue order and calm.

The departure point for the building was the work of modern master Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion. For its execution he turned to BD Studio's Bryan Dunstan whose words sum up Baker's home entirely: 'We are inspired to create quiet architecture that is structured by a rigorous spatial and geometric ordering.' ▶



Picture windows of grand proportion frame the views from the bedroom and library below
OPPOSITE PAGE FROM LEFT At the entrance, through a garden of columns, a photograph by Dook greets the onlooker; neatly structured lines set the tone both inside and out



Designed around the pre-existing trees on the plot, the property is an 'L-shape, which hems in a self-sustaining garden, wide deck of balau and an elongated sliver of a swimming pool. In the most elemental of gestures, the landscaping comprises a solid block of irises, which are left to turn with the seasons. The transition between inside and out is automatic, with no curtains or blinds to contain the interior. 'That way,' says Baker, 'you don't shut out the light or the world outside.'

Embracing the Elements

But how does one decorate a space such as this? According to Baker, you don't. 'The architecture lead the interior,' he explains. At the point of intersection between dark and light, rough and refined, plain and detailed, a sense of balance has been achieved that is ultimately soothing. Within its ultra-modern casing of seamless surfaces, the interior finishes are organic and tactile, from the warmth of smoked oak to George Baker linens in an array of earthy hues that evoke nature's palette. ▶





WITHIN ITS ULTRA-MODERN CASING OF SEAMLESS SURFACES, THE INTERIOR FINISHES ARE ORGANIC AND TACTILE, FROM THE WARMTH OF SMOKED OAK TO LINENS IN AN ARRAY OF EARTHY HUES THAT EVOKE NATURE'S PALETTE

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Without window treatments, the living room traps natural light all year round; in a spectrum of greys, subtle variations in texture create visual harmony; the uncomplicated lines of a Tonic coffee table are synchronised by a contemporary sofa from Mezzanine Interiors; the oak dining table and chairs are from The Private House Co





The smoked-oak staircase infuses the space with organic warmth and Baker's horse-riding saddle serves as sculpture draped over a beam OPPOSITE PAGE FROM TOP Up in the trees, the bedroom is an understated mix of George Baker linens against a white backdrop; Baker and his business partner Mandy Griffiths



IT IS THE INTERPLAY OF LEVELS AND PLANES WITHIN THE HOME THAT MAINTAIN THIS VEIN OF CALM

Streamlined Serenity

In the living room, streamlined furniture and a cubular coffee table are suitably minimalist in structure. Elsewhere too, adornment is kept to a controlled minimum and comes in the form of iconic African objets, from tribal necklaces to wooden carvings. The bedroom is equally low-key, where understated structures rule and a masculine mix of greys is offset by white. 'Being bombarded by colour and pattern every day, I went for a restful range of neutrals,' explains Baker.

Spatially, the inside of the house possesses an air of cohesion, which immediately appeases the senses. The interior walls are few, drawing in light; doors do not feature at all and the floors are an uninterrupted sweep of travertine throughout. The walls have bare-bones appeal in their unadorned state and upper levels seem to be suspended in space. It is the interplay of levels and planes within the home that maintains this vein of calm, which prompts Baker's retreat-like serenity. 'I feel like I'm living at a resort and soon I'm going to be presented with the bill,' he says of the house, whose interior conveys an innate sense of its construction. This is a space where natural light suffuses the core and architectural structure has been elevated to a fine art.

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