STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY





TRUETOFORM

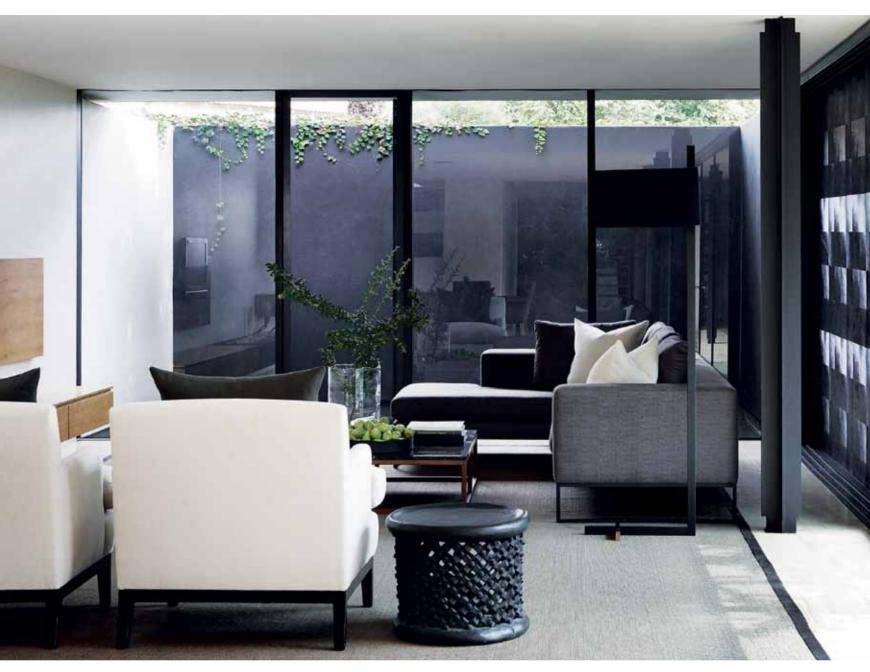
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A JOBURG HOME THAT FLIES THE FLAG FOR MODERN LIVING IS AN EXERCISE IN THREE OF ARCHITECTURE'S MOST SUPREME ELEMENTS – LIGHT, PROPORTION AND BALANCE

n 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.'





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

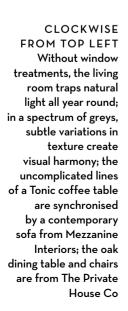
But how does one decorate a space such as this? According to Baker, you don't. 'The architecture lead the interior,' he explains. At the point of intersection between dark and light, rough and refined, plain and detailed, a sense of balance has been achieved that is ultimately soothing. Within its ultra-modern 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. •





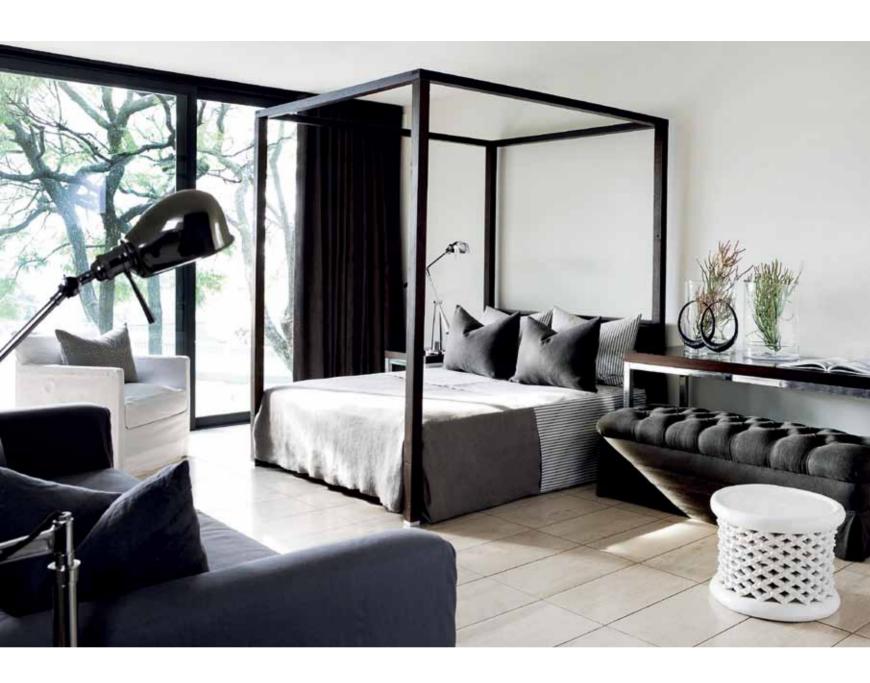


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Streamlined Serenity

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.

■ George Baker Furnishing Fabrics & Wallcoverings \$\sim 011 024 2747; ^\dagger www.georgebaker.co.za

