



view finder

THIS BOLDLY CONCEPTUALISED FAMILY HOME IN THE CONSTANTIA VALLEY WAS DESIGNED TO MAXIMISE ITS VINEYARD VISTAS

TEXT HILARY PRENDINI TOFFOLI STYLING DANIELLE HOWARD PHOTOGRAPHS WARREN HEATH



PREVIOUS PAGE A signature feature of Matt and Victoria Breslers' Cape Town home are the flyaway roof structures. Jonty, Hannah and Ollie catch a breath after a dip in the pool. The kitchenroom that now sits on the left of the patio was transported to the home in the back of a bakkie, then dragged up the mound by eight people, without one leaf having broken. ABOVE Ollie scoots through the dining area, in front of a painting by Donna McKellar and past a cabinet made by Versteijl (customfurniture.co.za). OPPOSITE Lights in the kitchen are Rock suspension lamps by Diesel Living with Foscarini (available at Créma Design, cremaadesign.co.za). The bar stools are of oiled oak by James Mudge (jamesmudge.co.za).

It was the sweep of undulating vineyards bordering the site that clinched the deal for Matt and Victoria Bresler. Better still, the vines were part of the Groot Constantia estate, and the couple could see the roof of the 300-year-old manor house. They fell in love with the vineyards, its how architect Jan-Heyn Vorster puts it. 'We all did at that first site meeting.'

The brief the Breslers had given Jan-Heyn and Tiaan Meyer of Meyer-Vorster Architects was to design an easy-going contemporary home for the couple and their three young children – Jonty, eight, Hannah, six, and Ollie, four – that would maximise this view. During the two and a half years it would take to build the house, they would witness the ever-changing ocean of vines shifting from a mass of orange during autumn to an intense spring green.

It was a journey Jan-Heyn describes as 'a wonderfully collaborative team effort' between the Breslers and all the professionals involved, including landscaper Mary Maarel and interior designer Danielle Howard. The result was a grittily on-trend home with flyaway roof structures and an edgy interior where generous amounts of solar film-coated glass and pale oiled oak are complemented by off-shutter concrete in both walls and ceilings. Enriching the vineyards, the bold, beautiful construction appears to hover slightly above the earth. There's a gentle transition down to a large, dark, salt-water pool that appears more like a pond – the only remnant of the previous property,

which the Breslers had demolished. A fynbos garden curls alongside the vineyard, and there are masses of flowering trees, both indigenous and exotic, on this one-acre plot. Matt is a tree lover. For the garden he

brought in 165, some as tall as six metres, many of them hard to source. 'For some of the species on my wish list, I ended up tracking down the only specimen I could find in the country,' he says. 'It was quite something, collecting a really old kokerboom I had tracked down on Gunter from the home of Wessel Steffens in Brackenfell. >





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'He had planted it 40 years ago when it was broomstick sized. As my three-year old, Ollie, helped eight of us drag the tree from its first suburban home, it really felt as if Wessel was handing Ollie the mantle to look after it for the next 40 years.'

Another pet project was the wine cellar racking system that Matt designed and installed to house nearly 1 000 bottles of wine. 'I used cabling and stainless steel rods to create a minimalist structure that suspends the bottles against the cellar walls, which we clad with klompie bricks – small, traditional, handmade bricks chosen to be in keeping with the vineyard setting.'

The house itself was an architectural challenge. The site's previous house had been low, so mountains of soil had to be brought in to raise the levels. This elevated the single-level structure so that services beneath the bedroom wing, such as geysers, the heat pump and the bore hole tank, could be accessed. However, although from the road the house appears to be a double story, on the vineyard side it appears to be a single storey, not visible from Groot Constantia's central waf (yard) – an aspect the architects intentionally took into account, considering the significance of this heritage site.

Another astute design feature is the location of the entrance foyer. This double-volume stairwell separates the four bedrooms – stepped to maximise each of their views – from the living and entertainment area where angled roofs let in more light from above. These jagged roofs, made of German zinc-coated titanium, balance the quieter low-slung roofs of the bedroom wing.

Matt and Victoria love the home's contemporary design and the open flow within. 'We always wanted to build out of straightforward materials like wood, cement, stone and glass,' says Victoria. 'We've aimed to complement that with the furniture we've bought while adding a bit of interest and character with some of our favourite collectables from our travels.'

Jan-Heyn says it was a treat to work with people who understand how good design improves your quality of life. 'All successful architectural projects should be a collaborative process,' he says. 'The garden and the interior design should both respond to the architecture.'

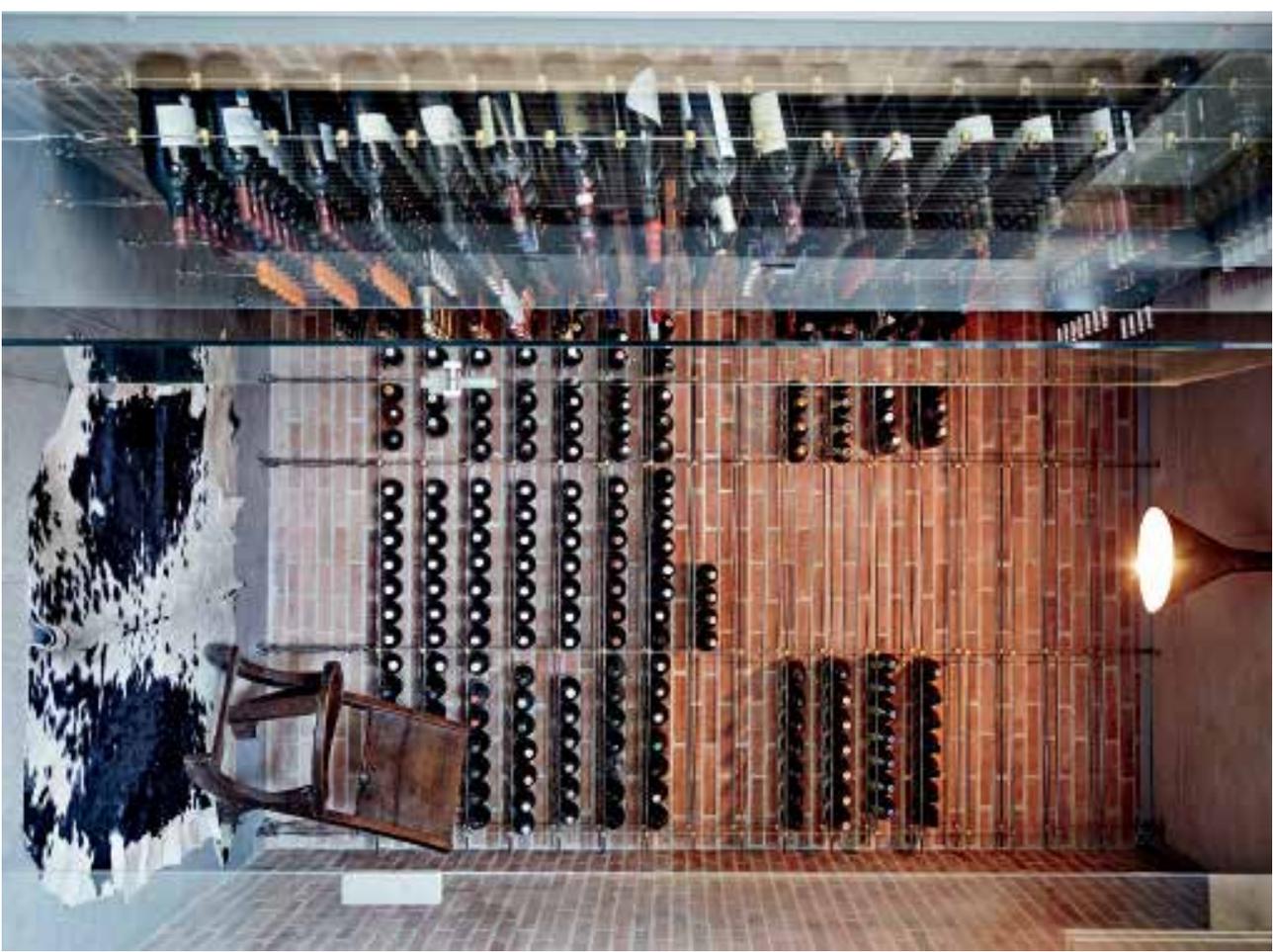
Malan Vorster, malanvorster.co.za; Meyer & Associates, meyerandassociates.co.za; Danielle Howard, dhiliv; Mary Mauriel Gardens, marymaurielgardens.co.za

Stone-edged grass steps lead down to the pool, the only remnant of the previous property, now dark and filled with salt water. OPPOSITE Victoria and Hannah get stuck into some baking in the kitchen. The oak dining table is from Mezzanine (mezzanineinteriors.co.za), and Nguni dining chairs with handwoven string seats are by John Vogel (vogelstudio.co.za). PREVIOUS PAGE Matt chose elegant leopard trees to complement the linear design of the house. Sliding shutters in Western red cedar from Stable Marketing (stablemarketing.co.za) enclose the master bedroom, which has Etilis wallpaper by St. Lager & Vinrey (stlager.co.za) and a revamped retro armchair from Space For Life (spaceforlife.co.za).





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Jonty plays with the family's Rhodesian ridgeback, Tumbo, on the stairway, which was constructed by Stable Marketing in oak, stainless steel and glass; in the living area, the oak coffee tables, and the sofa and long ottoman – both covered in grey cotton from Romo, South Africa (romosouthafrica.com) – are all from Mezzanine. The white tub chairs are vintage Foyatans. The painting is by Dutch artist Esther Meentuis. Matt works on his laptop in the TV room, reclining on a white leather sofa from Kloofrique (kloofrique.com). The armchair and coffee table are from Space For Life. The floating shelves feature art by a number of local artists such as JP Meyer, Neil Franks, Merrida du Toit, Jasper Eales and David McKenzie. OPPOSITE Traditional krompe bricks were used in the wine cellar for which Matt designed a minimalist racking system. The Ethiopian chair is from Amatulil (amatulil.co.za).



MATT AND VICTORIAS

HOME TRUTHS

In 2015, the trend that'll stay strong is the fusion of different styles – old with new, mixing character pieces with modernist clean architecture, or a Stockholm look with a touch of Burundi. **What we love about Constantia** are the large open spaces, the rural feel, and proximity to amazing walking, running and cycling in the vineyards and nearby forest and mountains. **We like to think this house is** the culmination of a great deal of anticipation, dreaming, planning and research, coming together into a space we love, on a wonderful pocket of land that we were very fortunate to find. We hope we have done the land justice. **The first thing I do when I get home** in summer is round up the kids – Jonty, Hannah, and Ollie – for a 'della' daddy-kiss. Then I take a deep look at our (very grounded) aspect over the lawn and vineyards towards the mountains. This exercise is all the more rewarding when the kids and Vix are out on the deck or in the pool (Mato). **The most bizarre decor item I've ever brought is** a used penis gourd, made from a kind of calabash, from one of the locals in Irian Jaya in Indonesia (Matt). **Our best travel destinations are** New Zealand, where I grew up and where my family lives; Myanmar, where Matt and I backpacked before we were married; is definitely among the best countries that either of us has been to (Victoria). **It's always been a dream of ours** to live in a place where nature is unavoidably, in part of every day, a place that helps us create for our kids top-notch memories of their childhood.



FROM TOP The master bathroom opens onto the garden. The bath is from Still Bathrooms (stillbathrooms.co.za). In Jonty's room, the bed linen is by Fern Living from Mezzanine, the curtains in Hannah's bedroom are by Design Team (designteamfabrics.co.za) and the bed by Raw Studios (rawstudios.co.za). OPPOSITE The wallpaper in the guest bedroom is by London-based Irish fashion designer Orla Kiely (orkiely.com). The bed on wheels is from Weylands (weylands.co.za) and the tufted cotton bedspread from @home (home.co.za).