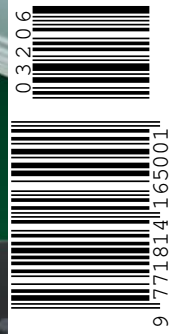


your practical guide to beautiful living

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SA's **No.1**
home and garden
magazine



R75.00 (vat incl.)
Namibia N\$75.00

February | March 2023

ROOKIE STYLIST

Meet the winner
of this cover shoot

IN THE KITCHEN

Gourmet burgers

Fun food for the family!

**3 COMPACT
GARDENS,**
even on a roof!

DIY
Clad a wall
with floorboards

**AIRBNB
APARTMENT**
Luxury in
just 20m²

5 inspiring small spaces

MUIZENBERG

Raise the roof for
extra living space

BLOEMFONTEIN

'Every inch counts in
our steel-frame house'

CARNARVON

A heritage
cottage revival

CAPE TOWN

Victorian in front,
modern at the back

**DECORATE
LIKE A PRO!** } curtain lengths • rug sizes
lighting • shapes & contrast

‘Our tiny home’

An inspired couple shows us the passion project that led to the creation of their business.



By Haidee Muller-Isaacs • Photographs Warren Heath/Bureaux • Production Sven Alberding



WHO LIVES HERE?

Philip and Lisa Nel, their terriers Luna and Rusty, and donkeys Raspberry and Rosie

WHERE Bloemfontein

SIZE house 68m², deck 24m²

These armchairs were an heirloom from Lisa's grandparents. "We had them reupholstered in leather," she says.

The Nels love their newly upholstered furniture with its mid-century modern style. "The colours in our house are also typical of that era and we're always on the lookout for special furniture pieces and accessories. Our best buy was this Afghan rug in the living room; we bought it at a hospice shop," says Lisa.



The laser-etched painting of a bee is by local artist Mandie Immelman. Glass lampshades from Red Hot Glass; light fixtures from Hoi P'loy



The kitchen is compact yet practical. There's even space for a washing machine. "The bathroom is also tiny but it has a large shower. And we have quite a big walk-in cupboard as storage space."

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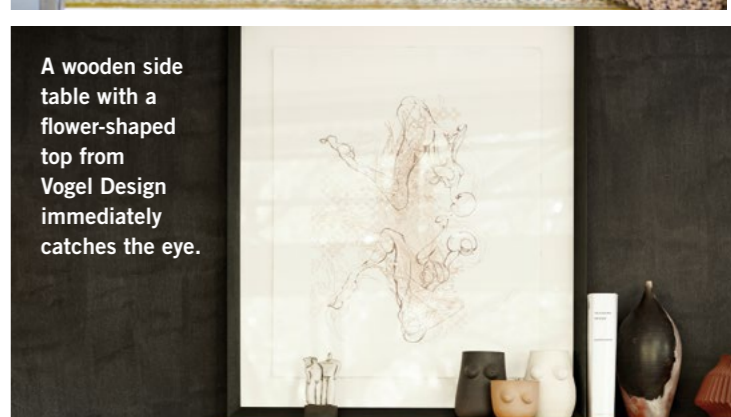
ince 2009, Philip and Lisa Nel have been living the dream. Surrounded by nature, with birdsong as their soundtrack, this couple has built a steel-framed house nestled among trees that caters to their every need.

Back then, when they had to move out of their rented flat, Philip's head was filled with plans. As a designer and architect, he felt impelled to design the perfect home for them based on the 'tiny house' concept. In short, the principle is that one must make do with as little as possible in as small a space as possible.

"My parents have a smallholding about 3ha in size just outside Bloemfontein, so there was enough space for us to set up a home. I could build the house that Lisa and I wanted, and make changes and improvements later as our needs evolved," he explains. The planning took about two months as things had to happen quickly.

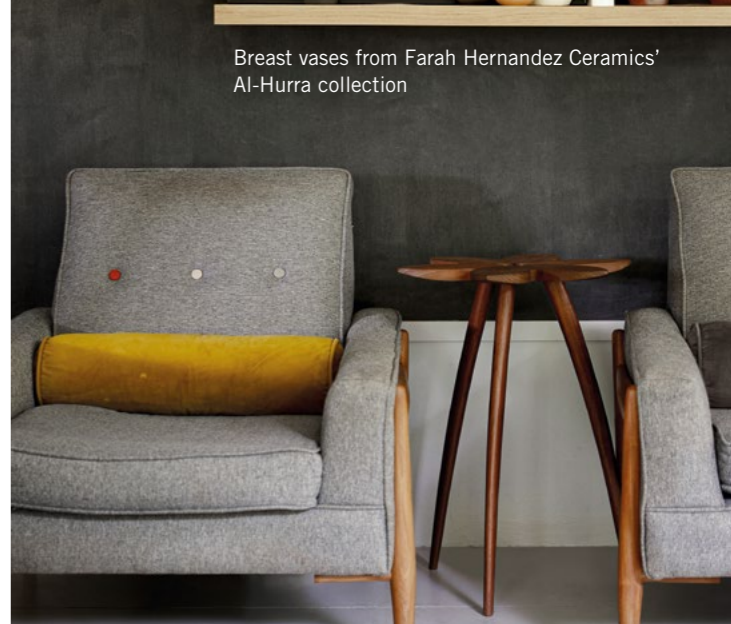
Shortly after they moved in, a couple from England who had emigrated to South Africa got wind of Philip's passion project and showed interest in a similar design. "I built them a house about 10 times the size of our little place between Ladismith and Montagu in the Little Karoo."

And that's how Inizio Homes came about. Since then, Philip has designed about 250 houses and built more than 30. "Initially, we built and handled everything ourselves but the logistics simply became too much. These days, I just do the design and manage the costs and the process." >>



A wooden side table with a flower-shaped top from Vogel Design immediately catches the eye.

Breast vases from Farah Hernandez Ceramics' Al-Hurra collection



READER HOME

The green chair is from Huisraad Modern. “Although we’ve mainly used autumn shades throughout the house, we’re currently into green,” says Philip. “If you visit again in a year’s time, there’s a good chance it will all be different.”



Green forest painting by Lisa's mom, Laura Slegtenhorst

The bath was given to the Nels by a friend five years ago when they built an extra room. “We repaired the inside and kept the outside rustic,” says Lisa.



The artworks on the bedroom wall are by Brilliant Xolo (left) and Robynne Gouws. Vintage pendant from Karoo Farm Stall

Inspiration from the environment

The use of glass in the Nels’ exquisitely furnished open-plan house helps to create the illusion of space. A cosy deck provides the perfect spot where the couple can relax and soak up their surroundings. “It feels just like a treehouse!” says Philip.

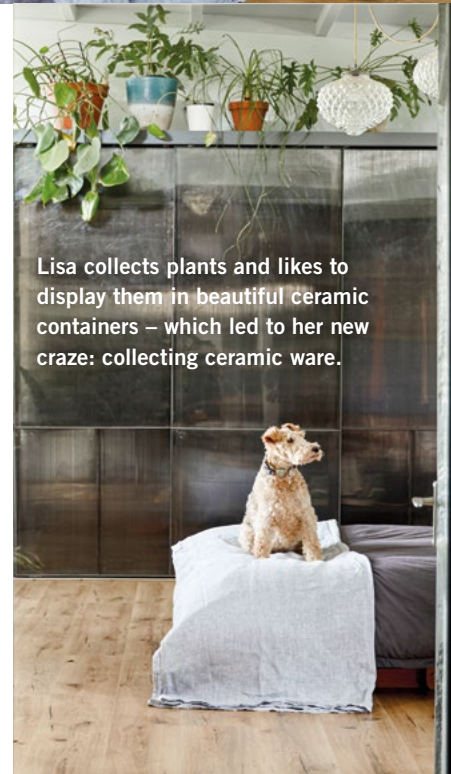
“Nature forms a huge part of our living space. It’s very relaxing.” The couple has also invited the outdoors in, as reflected by the warm autumn shades of their décor and Lisa’s collection of about 50 houseplants.

“The house was designed in such a way that it fits perfectly in-between the surrounding trees,” says Philip. The original structure of 40m² was slightly bigger than a double garage, with an adjoining 15m² deck. The Nels have added another 23m² to the interior and about 6m² to the stoep.

Lisa is an art and design lecturer at the Central University of Technology in Bloemfontein and other than plants, she likes to collect artworks and ceramics. “I have some from my days as a fashion design student and others that I acquired at exhibitions,” she says.

“As far as I’m concerned, art is a must in your living space. I’m currently doing a PhD through the University of Johannesburg in the philosophy of art and design, focusing on sustainability in the fashion industry,” says Lisa.

“Sustainability is vital for our future.” >>



Lisa collects plants and likes to display them in beautiful ceramic containers – which led to her new craze: collecting ceramic ware.

Recycle and re-use

A major portion of the Nels' house was built with upcycled materials: railway sleepers were used for the deck, old metal shelves serve as burglar bars and some of the home's cladding was made with metal plates from old train carriages.

"I used B-grade steel as a framework," says Philip. "It had a few minor flaws so I was able to get it at a good price. The house 'floats' above the ground and was built on skids so we can move it easily. The steel frame provides structure and strength."

The cladding for the framework is recycled Chromadek roofing sheets, with good insulation in the wall cavities and roof. Wide roof overhangs keep the house cool in summer.

The window frames are made of aluminium and the inside of the house is clad with marine plywood offcuts that Philip obtained from the manufacturer. "It works well; not only is it strong, but it also provides warmth," he says.

The steel structure was pre-manufactured in a factory, assembled elsewhere and transported by truck to its permanent location, where Philip had already prepared the foundation: concrete blocks sunk into the ground. Inizio Homes complies with the regulations of the SABS and the National Home Builders Registration Council, as well as SANS-XA for energy efficiency.

The couple's home is modern and comfortable. Cosy, but without any clutter. "Our office space is also here now. During the pandemic, I sold my office and started working full-time from home," says Philip.

What more could these two ask for? "We're definitely planning a solar-power system for the future," says Philip.



An anthracite stove keeps the house toasty during the Free State winters.

The Nels' donkey kids, Raspberry and Rosie, visit every morning in search of treats. "Lisa had always wanted donkeys and got them as foals from someone here in town," says Philip. "Carrots and apples are their favourite snacks."



[THE NELS' TIPS]

Living and building on a small scale

- Make sure you know what you can afford. Constructing a small home isn't necessarily cheaper if you just look at the cost per square metre - it's the scale that reduce costs. Maintenance is also much cheaper.
- Think carefully before you downsize - you need to be able to live with just the essentials.
- Find the right contractor who understands your specific needs. Many companies make promises on their websites about "solutions" for downsizing but have not yet done this in practice. Remember, if something sounds too good to be true, it is almost always the case. And ultimately it costs more - it's money you'll never get back.
- Incorporate as much green technology as possible. Services such as electricity and water are becoming more expensive and less reliable. Think solar panels, grey-water

treatment, groundwater and good insulation. The cost of these systems is significantly less for smaller homes.

- Opt for what you love and not what the current trends are - your home should be your safe and peaceful haven.
- Keep resale value in mind. A one-bedroom house won't attract buyers in any neighbourhood.
- Plan your home around plants and trees if possible. It's incredibly relaxing to live comfortably from the interior out.
- If you build only what is necessary, and re-use and recycle, you'll waste very little.
- Room dividers can also serve as shelf space.
- Make spaces multifunctional - our office also serves as a guest room.
- Buy multipurpose furniture such as a bed base with storage space at the bottom. 🏠

The striking burglar bars made a huge difference to the overall look of the Nels' house. "They were part of the home's design and work like a sliding security gate in front of the glass doors. Since they're made of perforated metal, they let in a lot of light, creating a lovely pattern, and they keep out the worst of the direct sunlight. And, of course, they keep us safe."

STOCKISTS AND CONTACTS

Brilliant Xolo [instagram.com/x_brilliant](https://www.instagram.com/x_brilliant) Farah Hernandez Ceramics [farahhernandez.co.za](https://www.farahhernandez.co.za), [dar-al-hurra.com](https://www.dar-al-hurra.com) Robynne Gouws [facebook.com/MyVibeArtStudio](https://www.facebook.com/MyVibeArtStudio) Hoi P'loy [hoiploy.com](https://www.hoiploy.com) Huisraad Modern [huisraad.co.za](https://www.huisraad.co.za) Inizio Homes [inizio.co.za](https://www.inizio.co.za) Karoo Farm Stall [facebook.com/karooopadstal](https://www.facebook.com/karooopadstal) Laura Slegtenhorst [instagram.com/lauraslegtenhorst](https://www.instagram.com/lauraslegtenhorst) Mandie Immelman [instagram.com/mandie.immelman](https://www.instagram.com/mandie.immelman) Red Hot Glass [spiceroute.co.za/artisans/red-hot-glass](https://www.spiceroute.co.za/artisans/red-hot-glass) Vogel Design [vogeldesign.co.za](https://www.vogeldesign.co.za)