



Sunday Times

HOME WEEKLY

19 APRIL 2015



• SAFARI STYLE

DON'T MISS THE PREMIER DÉCOR,
DESIGN & LIFESTYLE EXPO

24 - 27 APRIL

CTICC

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exciting competitions and Great Ideas
showcased by our exhibitors

GREAT
IDEA



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At Home Weekly we are big fans of small-space living – but every so often an enormous, rambling and rather spectacular abode takes our fancy too. And that’s definitely the case this week. The Observatory, our featured home (see Page 4), is situated in Leobo Private Reserve in the Waterberg, and its remarkable, sculptural design is the work of renowned SA architects Lesley Carstens and Silvio Rech. This is a house with serious “wow” factor; the sort of spot that makes even the most dedicated urbanite long to spend a few weeks on safari, enjoying views from its beautifully appointed decks and stargazing from the on-site observatory for which it is named.

Robyn



Mobile Model 002 by David Ross.

• perfectly formed

100% black

It’s all about the form, not the colour, says design fundi Cathy O’Clery. The programmes director of 100% Design South Africa and creative director of Platform Creative Agency in Cape Town is referring to the feature stand, titled 100% Black, that she has curated for Decorex Cape Town, which takes place in the Mother City next weekend.

“I have selected contemporary design pieces, both local and international, that are totally void of colour,” says O’Clery. “The aim is to focus the visitor on how good form, shape, line and structure play an integral part in the designer’s thinking and creative process.”

O’Clery says she is interested in how much of today’s design is dictated by its sculptural quality. “In some instances, it could be simple, minimalist lines which are honest in their lack of detail. In others, it is the quiet, almost stealth-like shape of the piece. Likewise it could be the twisting complexity born of new technologies

or the sensual flow of a curvaceous form created by the touch of the hand to the material.”

By showcasing all the items in black, O’Clery hopes to celebrate – with visitors to the exhibition – the beauty and deep thinking of such design consideration. “And after seeing 100% Black, we’re hoping everyone will make it to Joburg in August to see 100% Colour, sponsored by Plascon – a celebration of pieces where colour is integral to the overall design.”

Some of the designers and design companies featured in the exhibition are Dokter and Misses, Muuto, Gregor Jenkin, Bofred, David Ross, Design Afrika, Jasper Eales, Indigi Designs, Friday Gibu, Clementina van der Walt, Dauphin Human Design Group and Inova.

100% Black, and much more decor and design inspiration, is at Decorex Cape Town from April 24 to 27 at the Cape Town International Convention Centre. Visit decorex.co.za.
– Text: *Jacquie Myburgh-Chemaly*
– Photography: © *Supplied*

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decorex giveaway

Ten lucky Cape Town-based Sunday Times Home Weekly readers will each win double tickets to Decorex Cape Town, the city’s premier decor, design and lifestyle expo that will offer visitors both practical ideas and creative inspiration at the Cape Town International Convention Centre from April 24 to April 27 2015. To enter, answer the following question: In which city is this instalment of Decorex being held? SMS the keyword “DECOREX” and your answer, followed by your full name, to 45476 (SMSes cost R1.50 each).

TERMS & CONDITIONS

The competition is open to all Cape Town residents, excluding employees of Times Media Group and SmartCall. The winners will be the first randomly drawn entries. The competition starts today, Sunday April 19 2015, at 6am and closes on Tuesday April 21 2015 at 10pm. The winners will be notified telephonically by Thursday April 23 2015. SMSes cost R1.50 and errors will be billed. Prizes must be accepted and/or rejected as awarded. No prizes can be deferred or exchanged for cash. The editor’s decision is final and no correspondence can be entered into after the winners have been announced and prizes delivered.

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The Observatory, the private bush villa at Leobo Private Reserve.



Mid-century modernist Hans Wegner Wishbone chairs introduce a simple, pared-back minimalism.



Off the main living area, the kitchen combines modern, sophisticated features with refined rustic features.

the sheltering sky

A safari fantasy in the Waterberg for a British IT entrepreneur and adventurer is not only architecturally spectacular, but is also a haven for the Jules Verne-like interests of its owner

Text © Graham Wood/Bureaux **Production** © Sven Alberding/Bureaux
Photography © Greg Cox/Bureaux

It all started in about 2000, when a friend of mine knew someone in South Africa who was selling some land," says British IT entrepreneur Rory Sweet, who built this spectacular African bush villa overlooking the Palala Valley at Leobo, a private game reserve in the Waterberg. "We thought it would be quite a fun trip to go and have a look at it." And so began a love affair with a piece of land that, a bit more than a decade later, would be the site of a fantastical holiday home.

Rory snapped up the 800ha on offer at the time, then began buying surrounding farms, eventually accumulating 8 000ha. "Then we removed all the fences between the farms," he says. "Along the way we stocked it with game and tried to return it to how it used to be."

Rory and his wife, Lizzy, had stayed at North Island in the Seychelles, the award-winning exclusive resort designed by renowned South African architects Silvio Rech and Lesley Carstens. Their work is often referred to as pioneering a "New African" aesthetic, which fuses a range of African spatial, architectural and decorative influences, and often involves working closely with craftsmen to create something almost rustic, but modern, fresh and sophisticated. Rory and Lizzy asked them to design their bush villa.

Rory is not your typical IT geek. He is something of an adventurer and latter-day explorer who has made expeditions to the north and south poles. Before approaching Rech and Carstens, he had already introduced some extreme adventure activities to Leobo. "We don't really use it in the way that you would a traditional game lodge or game reserve," he explains. His toys there include extreme off-road vehicles called Polaris buggies, quad bikes and even a helicopter.

While The Observatory, as the house has been dubbed, was to be a "proper home" for Rory and his family to stay in for long periods, they weren't looking for anything conventional. Rech explains the home is "a spatial adventure" in itself – rational and carefully thought through, but designed to provide experiences, surprises and delight around every corner. "It's essentially a veranda-house concept with various other little accretions," says Rech, explaining how the living area and veranda has other "cells"

clustered around it, interconnecting and "honeycombing" their way into the spaces between. The large central living area's wide, open spaces spill out onto a veranda, with huge glass doors creating dramatic views. In it there's a sunken circular lounge with a fireplace, a dining room and a kitchen, and a floating mezzanine like a nest in midair, where you can watch movies.

The veranda extends the space outwards and leads down to a swimming pool. The private areas, like the bedrooms and bathrooms, are housed in the surrounding huts, vaults, turrets, corbelled domes and termite-mound-style towers. "From that central space, every time you radiate outwards, there's a little opportunity to create an experience," Rech continues. The architecture doesn't reveal itself all at once: there's a sense of discovery.

The Observatory takes its name from a late addition to the plan: a 7m tower with a library crowned with an automated rotating copper dome from California, which houses a 20-inch telescope for stargazing. "When we were doing the house, we thought a library would be a really cool thing for someone if they wanted to work there quietly. We just had this idea to put an observatory on top, and the whole idea changed into something much more interesting and unusual," says Rory, who wanted the library and observatory to look like something out of Jules Verne's *20 000 Leagues Under the Sea*. It has three levels. At the bottom is a study that is one of Rory's favourite places. From the study, you climb up a covered submarine-style ladder into a gantry filled with things that interest Rory: skulls, bones, a century-old crocodile skin and other artefacts such as military kists and antique book presses. And from there you climb into the observatory itself, where the stargazing awaits.

The wonder of The Observatory is not just in the spaces themselves, but also in the finishes – the textures, the materials, and the building and decorative techniques throughout. Every detail has been considered, thought through and carefully articulated to mediate an architectural interaction with the bush, with refined craft and a profound understanding of architecture as experience.

• leoboprivatereserve.com
• Silvio Rech and Lesley Carstens
adventarch@mweb.co.za



This circular rooftop deck (with Jacuzzi!) is a dramatic spot for viewing sunsets.



In the bedroom, fabrics are hand-dyed natural linen and wools in a natural palette to complement the colours of the surrounding landscape and bush.



In the main living area, the twin forms of a sunken circular lounge and a floating mezzanine 'TV nest' create another of Leobo's grand architectural moments.