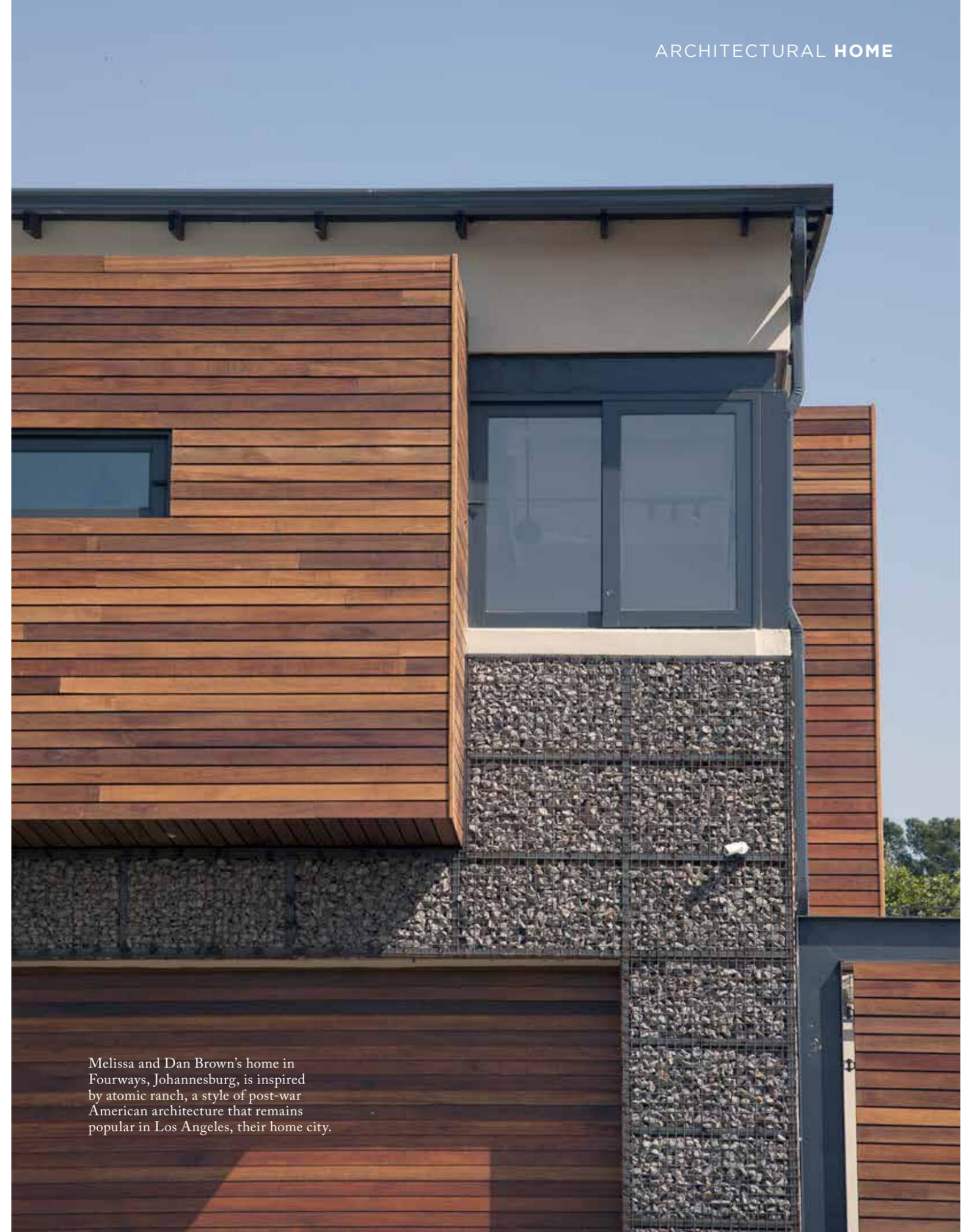




ON DISPLAY

In its celebration of space and glorious natural vistas, this Joburg home takes estate living to a whole new level

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Melissa and Dan Brown's home in Fourways, Johannesburg, is inspired by atomic ranch, a style of post-war American architecture that remains popular in Los Angeles, their home city.

Proof that you can create a luxe designer-look interior without paying the earth, Melissa's resourceful finds include the retro sideboard from Mint (minttheshop.com), and the bar stools and dining table that were bought on Bid or Buy (bidorbuy.co.za). The table's base was originally a bright yellow that Melissa repainted black. The dining chairs were bought for R350 each from an antique shop in Albertskroon. The timber floors are by AA Flooring (082-320-4699).



For Melissa and Dan Brown, moving to South Africa from the USA just over five years ago offered a luxury that had eluded them for almost 20 years and one which we so often take for granted: space. The rambling, rocky surrounds of Century Property Developments' Helderfontein Estate in Fourways, Johannesburg, couldn't have offered a more inspiring site. 'The estate is like no other we've ever seen. It's packed with trees and boulders that have been left unspoiled for decades and is a far cry from the concrete jungle of Hollywood, where we could go days without seeing a bird,' says property specialist Dan, who works for Century as the deputy CEO for the development.

Initial dealings with architects resulted in what the Browns describe as 'cookie-cutter Tuscan' proposals, which in every way undermined the natural character of their stand. After researching 'house in the trees' on the internet, Melissa chanced upon atomic ranch style, a strain of post-war residential architecture defined by large expanses of glass contained within a prefabricated metal framework. 'Many of the case studies were California-based so not only did the aesthetic appear to meet our design intentions, it also felt as though we would be introducing something from back home,' she explains.

Further research led them to commission architect Derick Britz of Studios Architects whose designs they admired for the way in which they respected their surrounds. 'His design was exactly what we had envisioned – a contemporary interpretation that would sit comfortably within the vernacular of a highveld landscape,' comments Dan, who even got to have his own man cave, a rocky-walled space beneath the home where he can play music and practise on his saxophone without disturbing anyone.

At 600m² their home by no means lacks intimacy or warmth. Despite the surfeit of glass, even the vast double-volume main bedroom and living area have a snug atmosphere created by the 'sandwich' of wood floors and ceilings, which envelop the space in a warm embrace. Joburg's notorious winter offensive is counteracted by double glazing, a sophisticated central-heating system and an ingeniously well-insulated floor, comprising laminated pine profiles that are elevated three metres above ground level. 'It's a simple, robust system used in the USA but it hasn't yet taken off in South Africa,' remarks Dan.

Melissa didn't want the furniture or walls to compete with the structure of the house or the trees outside. Aside from the 'splurge' on a down-filled sofa from Sevens, almost all pieces were sourced second-hand, not that you could tell. Every evening for about a year, she scoured Gumtree and Bid or Buy in search of pieces that would complement the home's modern take on mid-20th century design. The retro standing lamp in the living area, for instance, cost R300 and was bought from an old lady in Pretoria who brought it back from Paris in the 1960s. Originally brass and rather worse for wear, it now lends the gallery-like proportions of the living area a striking sculptural quality, refurbished and powder-coated black.

Residing in what is essentially a big, enclosed patio fronting an indigenous garden, Melissa, Dan and their three-year-old son, Boston, get to enjoy the indoors and outdoors in equal measure – regardless of the season. What they enjoy most is a Sunday morning bacon and egg fry up, after which they walk to the banks of the meandering Jukskei River with Boston on his scooter and the dogs in tow. 'To be confronted constantly by the beauty surrounding our home is a precious privilege that has to some extent helped us side-step the pressures of fast-paced city life,' Melissa comments. □

Century Property Developments, 011-300-8700, century.co.za;
Derick Britz, Studios Architects, studios.co.za



The metal-and-glass structure provides the feeling of living outdoors, in the trees.



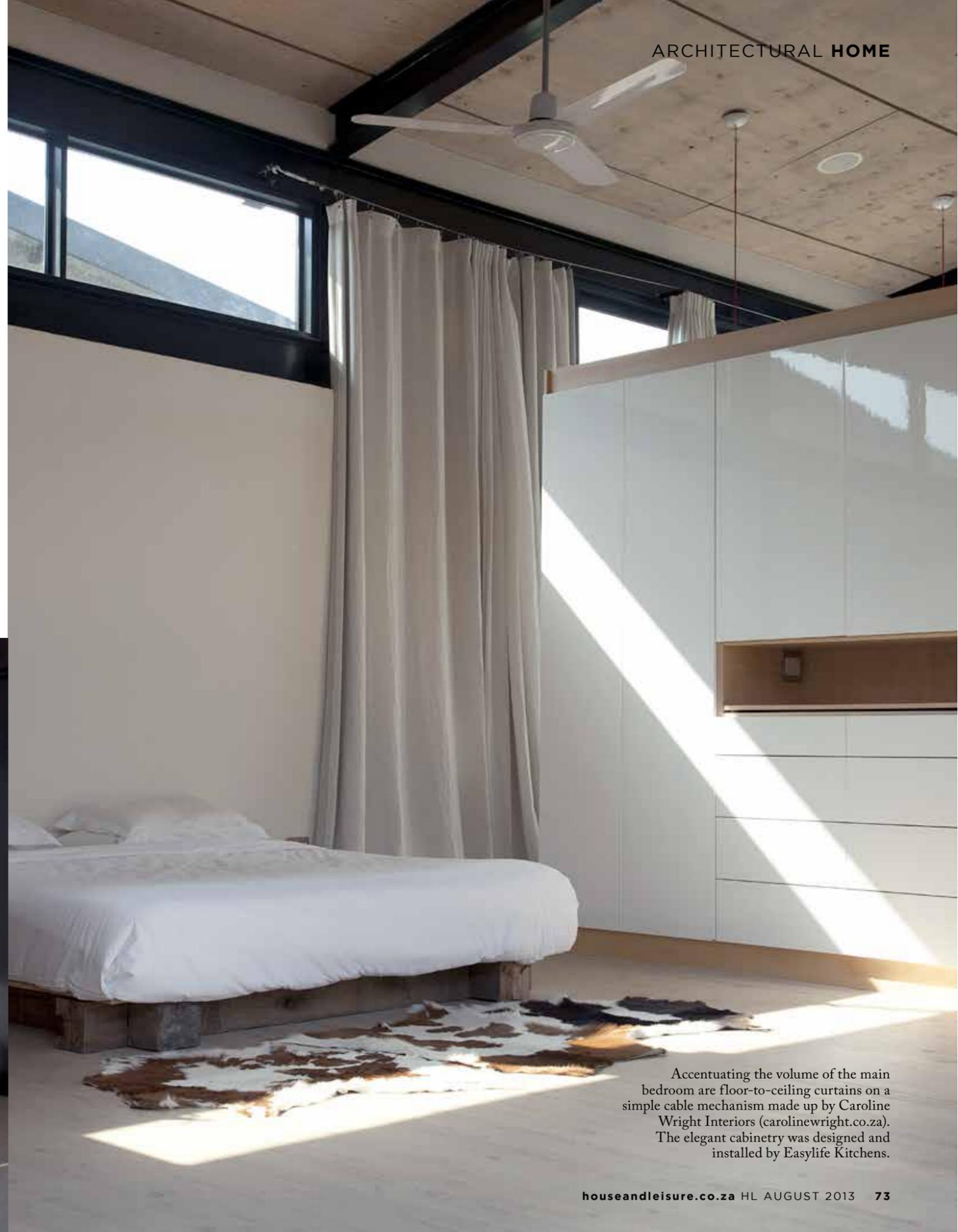
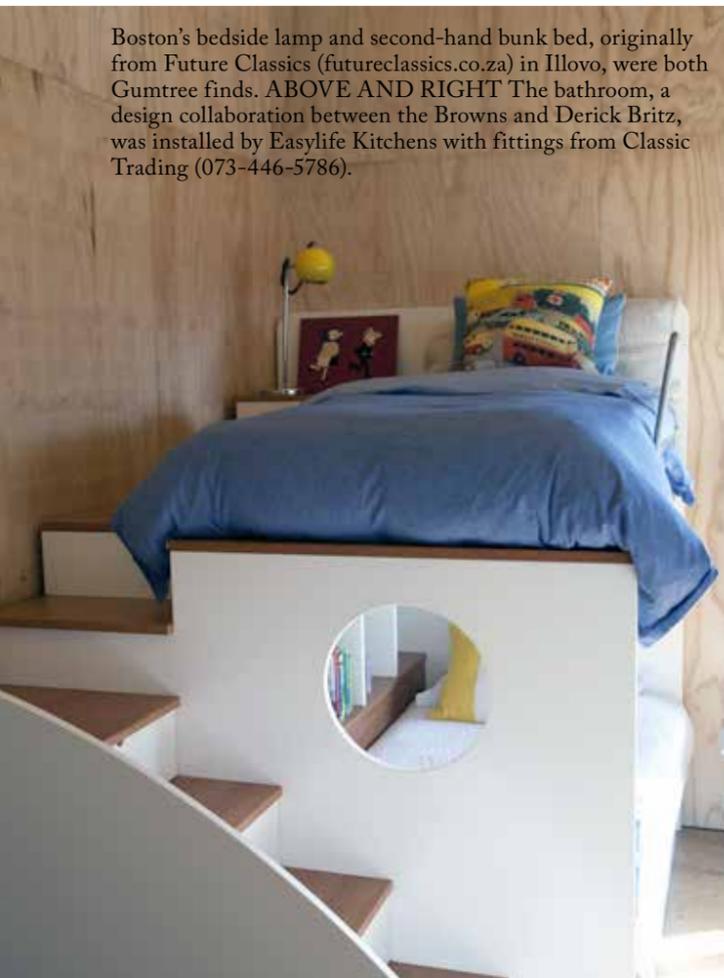
The Eero Saarinen Tulip-style chairs and dining table continue the Mid-Century Modern theme running through the home. OPPOSITE, BOTTOM In winter the home is kept well-insulated with windows and doors featuring double glazed glass installed by TMG Designs (tmgdesigns.co.za); the kitchen, designed and installed by Easylife Kitchens (easylifekitchens.co.za), is a handsome composition of wood, white duco and black metro tiles.



MELISSA AND DAN'S HOME TRUTHS

Luxury for me is indulgence in those things which I value far more than items money can buy. Time with my wife and son comes up trumps in this category! (Dan) **The best thing about living where we do** is the trees and the sense of being outdoors (Melissa). **When it comes to decorating I'm inspired by** people who manage to make spaces beautiful without spending a lot of money, who don't over-furnish and know when the house is done (Melissa). **My favourite room is** the living area – I love spending a lazy Saturday morning lying on the sofa with my wife and little boy (Dan); our bedroom; every morning we wake up at eye level with the birds (Melissa). **The most indulgent purchase for our home were** our linen bedroom curtains – they're beautifully elegant without being pretentious (Melissa); our goose-down sofa (Dan). **When I get home the first thing I do is** tend to the needs of my three-year-old and two dogs (Melissa); find my wife to give her a smile, hug and a kiss, then our son, and then the dogs (Dan). **We like listening to** Beautiful Creatures CDs. We really get into singing the songs with our son (Melissa); *The Breakfast Club* soundtrack album – I'm an Eighties boy through and through (Dan). **We keep the chill at bay** with our pellet-burning stove – it gets going at 5am while we're still asleep (Melissa); down comforters (Dan). **Items at the top of our wish list** include a climbing wall and swing for Boston's playroom (Melissa); kitting out my music and photography studio in the man cave. It's not high on the priorities list but... (Dan).

Boston's bedside lamp and second-hand bunk bed, originally from Future Classics (futureclassics.co.za) in Illovo, were both Gumtree finds. ABOVE AND RIGHT The bathroom, a design collaboration between the Browns and Derick Britz, was installed by Easylife Kitchens with fittings from Classic Trading (073-446-5786).



Accentuating the volume of the main bedroom are floor-to-ceiling curtains on a simple cable mechanism made up by Caroline Wright Interiors (carolinewright.co.za). The elegant cabinetry was designed and installed by Easylife Kitchens.