

Philippus and Reani Fouché's new home in Irene's Southdowns Estate makes the most of its pastoral setting. Floor-to-ceiling windows by Pronk Aluminium ([pronkalu.co.za](http://pronkalu.co.za)) slide aside, opening up the garden, where Caro (left) and Jeani enjoy playing, to the vintage dining-room table and John Vogel Nguni chairs from Ebony Design ([ebonydesign.co.za](http://ebonydesign.co.za)).

# COUNTRY MODERN

Rustic outdoor living combines with clean, contemporary lines in this cool Scandi-style barn in Pretoria

Text **Roberta Coci** Styling **Leana Schoeman** Photographs **Elsa Young**

The Fouchés spend most of their time in the vast garden, which is why they asked Mathews and Associates Architects to create a substantial outdoor entertainment area. OPPOSITE FROM TOP The home is clad in corrugated metal in the typical style of Swedish barns; the home borders the Irene Dairy Farm, giving it a truly bucolic feel.



‘We’ve always dreamed of living in a minimalist, contemporary home,’ say Pretoria-based engineers Philippus and Reani Fouché. After moving out of their ‘very traditional’ house in Waterkloof the couple grabbed the chance to realise their ambition: a sleek, ascetic barn that turns country living on its head. In keeping with its rustic surrounds, the design guidelines for Irene development Southdowns Estate might require adhering to an agricultural vernacular but the couple sought to balance it ‘with a very modern design’, says Philippus. After finding that typical Swedish barn architecture perfectly fitted their vision, they approached Mathews and Associates Architects in Pretoria with a brief to create a Scandinavian farmhouse.

With two engineers checking up on the build every day it was never going to be a slapdash project, and the house took two years to complete. ‘The design phase itself took about a year,’ says Philippus. ‘We kept paring down the original proposal until we had a truly minimalist design.’ Reani is quick to add that they wouldn’t build again in a hurry. ‘My husband is a real perfectionist, so everything was done exactly as it should be, even if that meant doing it over two or three (or even four) times.’

Well worth the wait, the finished house boasts an industrial look with a strong craftsmanship identity thanks to details such as off-shutter concrete elements and corrugated-metal cladding on prominent walls. The lack of windows on the main facade adds to its desirably austere look and feel, which is balanced by an extensive use of wood and neutral hues, in true Scandinavian tradition.

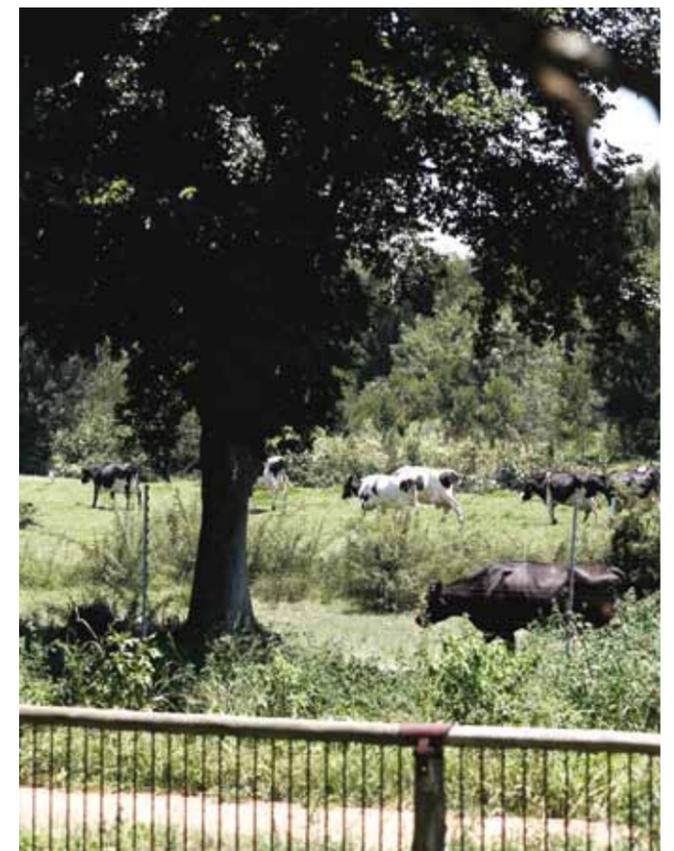
Also in typical Swedish style, the home complies with the latest green building design guidelines. Oversized floor-to-ceiling, north-facing, double-glazed windows ensure optimal utilisation of sun warming during winter. Warm-water under-floor heating and isolation of the floors, walls and roof also help to create a comfortable living space with minimal energy used for heating and cooling.

Infatuated as they are with Scandinavian design, Philippus and Reani briefly considered filling their home with Mid-Century Modern classics. ‘In the end, the beautiful contemporary furniture being manufactured in South Africa convinced us to furnish the house exclusively with local pieces,’ says Philippus, citing design names such as Raw Studios, Tonic Design, Ebony and OKHA as far exceeding their expectations.

While the Fouchés bought or commissioned most of the furniture and art, there are hints of a previous life that add a touch of warmth and nostalgia: Philippus’ mother’s stinkwood dining-room table and a riempie bench that belonged to his great grandmother, for example, while a 1936 Pierneef hanging in the cellar proves the couple’s aesthetic is not strictly contemporary. The clean lines of their home afforded Philippus the opportunity to revisit his art collection with the aim of keeping only pieces that complemented the new space. ‘The contemporary design suited the abstract works I’d collected by Fred Schimmel, sculptures by Eduardo Villa, and figurative art by Bettie Cilliers-Barnard and Carl Büchner,’ he says. ‘In addition, we used the opportunity to acquire works by contemporary artists such as Sybrand Wiechers, Diane Victor and Regi Bardavid.’

It’s the people who truly transform a house into a home, and the Fouchés’ two young daughters, Jeani, 6, and Cara, 4, have eased right in. ‘I love the size of it,’ says Jeani, who claims her bedroom is the best room in the house. Reani admits that the house has changed the family dynamic somewhat. ‘We were never big entertainers but since moving in we find we invite people around all the time,’ she says. ‘Can you think of anything more unique than having cows graze beside your garden? That’s worth sharing.’ ◻

**Mathews and Associates Architects, maaa.co.za**



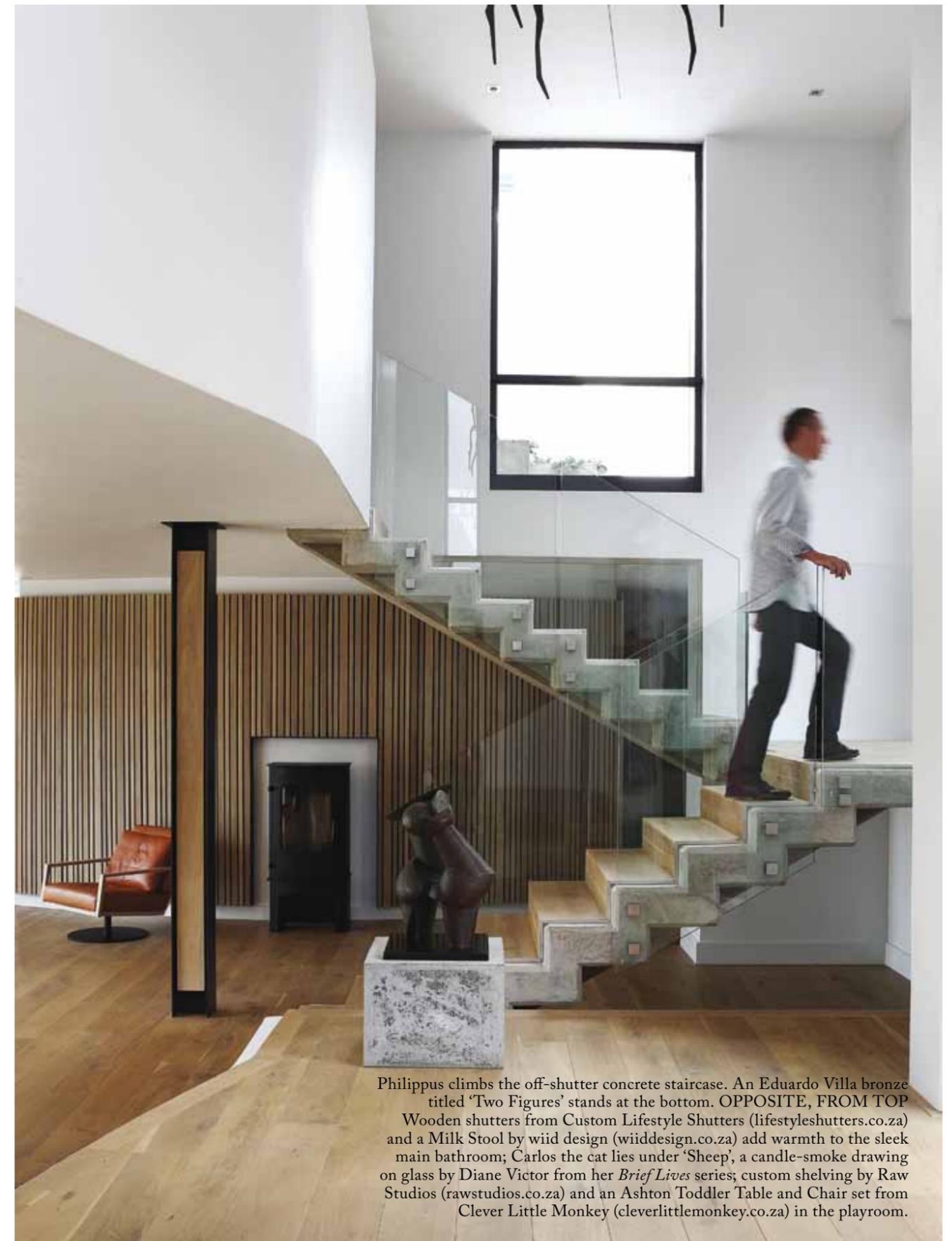


Reani's favourite room is the kitchen, which was designed by Lifestyle Projects ([lifestyle-projects.co.za](http://lifestyle-projects.co.za)). Her two daughters usually keep her company from the comfort of the Eero Aarnio bubble chair from Innovations ([innovations@yebo.co.za](mailto:innovations@yebo.co.za)). The stylish Draper Kitchen Stools are by Andrew Dominic, from Ebony Design.



PHILIPPUS' HOME TRUTHS

For us, easy living means simplicity, living an uncomplicated life yet with all the right ingredients such as music, art and fine food. I relax by spending time with our children and listening to classical music. The best thing about living where we do is the open agricultural space and views of the pasture and dairy farm. To me, style is the skill of creating a distinctive, yet unique experience. My own style is very personal, a minimalist mix of contemporary and traditional South African. I'm inspired by Scandinavian architecture and design. Building our own home has taught me patience. Don't hesitate to let the contractor redo, redo and redo until you are entirely satisfied. My interiors motto is minimalist – less is more. My favourite piece of design advice is to take your time. My favourite room in our home is the study, which also serves as my music listening room. My most treasured piece is a Diane Victor candle-smoke drawing on glass titled 'Sheep' from her *Brief Lives* series (below left). Reani loves cooking, so our entertaining style is a formal three-course dinner. My signature dish is Norwegian salmon served with a salad and a glass of ice-cold Chardonnay. Our favourite restaurants are Braserie de Paris in Pretoria and Aubergine in Cape Town. My most inspiring place is the Okavango Delta in Botswana. The best way to spend a weekend is at home, relaxing.



Philippus climbs the off-shutter concrete staircase. An Eduardo Villa bronze titled 'Two Figures' stands at the bottom. OPPOSITE, FROM TOP Wooden shutters from Custom Lifestyle Shutters ([lifestyleshutters.co.za](http://lifestyleshutters.co.za)) and a Milk Stool by wiid design ([wiiddesign.co.za](http://wiiddesign.co.za)) add warmth to the sleek main bathroom; Carlos the cat lies under 'Sheep', a candle-smoke drawing on glass by Diane Victor from her *Brief Lives* series; custom shelving by Raw Studios ([rawstudios.co.za](http://rawstudios.co.za)) and an Ashton Toddler Table and Chair set from Clever Little Monkey ([cleverlittlemonkey.co.za](http://cleverlittlemonkey.co.za)) in the playroom.