

History Class

Simplicity and understated glamour characterise the extreme makeover of this historical building – which transformed it into a thoroughly practical and contemporary home for a family with three boisterous sons

Text: Andrea Viretta Production Diary; in Green Photographs: Dorey

The exterior of Stone Lodge demonstrates how seamlessly the architects integrated the old stone building with the new and its rough-cast plaster walls. Reminiscent of Highveld earth, the new building houses the open-plan living and dining area, kitchen, cold rooms and the new patio. Upstairs are the children's bedrooms. Landscape architect Liz Steyn 011-486-4034 redesigned the gardens.

Johannesburg's older suburbs are full of magnificent baronial homes with outdated bathrooms and kitchens that don't serve modern lifestyles. Many of these heritage homes are now being bought by a younger generation with the energy and foresight to sensitively restore and transform them into contemporary dwellings. Some are even undergoing a second wave of renovations to remove a first wave of insensitive reworkings by a previous generation. When decorator Michele Throssell was commissioned by old friends to do the interiors for their new acquisition, she realised that this historical home would require more than just TLC and slipcovers to make it livable, so she assembled her trusty team of Keith Mason from PWM Architects and landscape architect Liz Steyn.

Visitors would be wrong to assume that the house was designed by Sir Herbert Baker. Built during the early 20th century in the Arts and Crafts style typical in Johannesburg at the time, it is in fact the work of his partner FLH Fleming. The Arts and Crafts style was popularised by Baker and his company a century ago and, typically, the house has walls of stone and a bell-shaped roof covered in wooden shingles. It had been previously renovated and was, according to the architects, 'a big mess'. Alterations to the living area had left it dark and drab; a rabbit warren of rooms with low ceilings and pointless openings had been added on to the back of the house, while all the bedrooms were crammed into a small area on the top floor.

The renovation process started with the demolition of all the previous additions. Then the entrance was moved to a more sensible location in the middle of the front facade; three bedrooms and two bathrooms were built on to accommodate the family's three sons; and the main bedroom was expanded and a bathroom incorporated into the space – these changes almost doubled the size of the house. Other additions to the property included a separate cottage, pool houses, a patio, a playroom and new staff quarters. Following the basic guidelines laid down by The Parktown Weutcliff Heritage Trust, the additions are ingeniously integrated into the style of the old house, but do not mimic the style exactly. While the original is of stone, the new buildings are covered in a layer of unpainted rough-cast plaster used by architects of that period.

When it came to decorating the space, Michele combined modern amenities with classic style. In the bathrooms, for example, she chose traditional black-and-white floor tiles and old-school accessories – her subtle marriage of modern baths and old-fashioned finishes effortlessly straddles

HOUSE OF THE MONTH

Decorator Michele Throssell devised the contemporary space for cooking, dining, entertaining and watching TV, which is subdivided with the classically designed couch from John Nal 011-474-9492, covered in Texas Sonik Trusuede 011-883-0580. The family's furniture and Persian carpet have been mixed with new pieces. The scatter cushions are covered in Knole in Vintage from St Leger & Viney's Provenance Two range and in Ralph Lauren fabric; also from St Leger & Viney 011-444-6722. The glass table is from Morgan Associates 031-303-2853. The grey dresser and the table and chairs are from La Grange 011-880-2245. The kitchen was designed and painted by Van Goethals from Antiques & Heritage 011-482-1871. The taps are from Antique Bathrooms 011-726-7114.





the various periods while still evoking the history of a bygone era. As is the case with the exterior, the transition inside from one era to the next is seamless. A new kitchen and living space, incorporating a dining and TV area, was situated where the warren of rooms once was. A durable floor of red brick, large windows that open out onto the garden and a covetable set of industrial-style refrigerators encased in blonde wood are some of the elements that make this space both inviting and absolutely practical. The duck-egg-blue wooden kitchen cabinets create an undeniably old-fashioned air alongside a battery of hi-tech amenities, while a large French dresser from La Grange, painted in a battleship grey, lives handsomely alongside the owner's polished antique cabinet that is used to house glassware.

The farmhouse kitchen leads off to a patio furnished with an oversized table and suitably chunky wicker chairs. An important addition to the house is the area for pouring drinks and the cold-storage rooms that simplify entertaining and allow for large gatherings. The original house had wooden floors and these have been retained.

Downstairs, a study, the formal lounge and a dining room are decorated in subtle shades ranging from cream to dark grey with accents of black and olive. For the walls Michele chose an array of shades of white from a greyish white to a creamish white. 'I love white, including all shades from stone to grey whites,' she says. The subtle gradations are almost imperceptible, but certainly add depth and visual variety to the rooms. The most opulent room is the dining room, which boasts a huge chandelier, handpainted velvet curtains and exquisite wallpaper from St Leger & Viney. The owners updated their dining-room suite with a classic fabric of black-and-white stripes.

Upstairs, the children's bedrooms are decorated in brighter colours, each with its own boyish theme. For the main bedroom, Michele chose a wraparound built-in cupboard and bookshelves, rendering the space comfortable and cosy. Window treatments are a combination of shutters and curtains. The main en-suite bathroom, with its grey marble splashbacks and his-and-hers bathroom cabinets recessed into the wall, is spacious and open-plan. Michele found an ingenious way of incorporating the loo – she had it built next to the shower in a sandblasted glass enclosure.

The key to the reinvention of this home lies in a sensitive modernisation that has remained true to its historical spirit to create a home that will no doubt become a much-loved legacy for a new generation. □

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HOUSE OF THE MONTH

THIS PICTURE Decorator Michele Throssell has chosen a colour palette of blue and white, with an existing couch covered in Villa Stripe from Home Fabrics 011-262-3492 dominating the seating area. Two standing lamps from Head Interiors 011-325-2700 and a lantern from White on White 011-341-0696 provide enough light for evening entertainment. **OPPOSITE, TOP** A focal point in a corner incorporates the owners' existing table and a chair slipcovered in a light blue linen from St Leger & Viney. The floors were done using Mahonie Satin bricks from Corobrik 014-592-2157. These were cut in half and then grouted onto the cement floor in a double-herringbone design using cement grouting. **BOTTOM** The children's themed bedrooms are relatively informal. The teenage son's bedroom has a 'Ralph Lauren' look about it, says Michele, the leather bed offsetting the pictures of aeroplanes from Handmade Frames 011-440-6353.



THIS PAGE The main bathroom has been newly designed to reflect the era in which the house was built. Classic basins and taps from Antique Bathrooms 011-726-7114 are combined with a contemporary Xtacy Bath from Libra Baths 011-444-1177. **OPPOSITE** A subtle palette of white and wheat creates a sense of calm in the main bedroom. Michele commissioned The Great Zambezi Trading Post 011-726-5626 to custom-design the wicker bed, while the design team from Michele Throssell Interiors created the cupboards that line the bedroom and ensuite bathroom. The cream carpets are from FloriDecor 011-463-8770, and the papyrus artwork on the wall is from Hadedá 011-788-9859.



Q&A WITH PWM ARCHITECTS

PWM Architects worked with Michele Throssell to transform this house into the large contemporary family home it is now.

What is the history of this home? Stone Lodge was built during the early 20th century for one of the great Judge Presidents of the Transvaal, Leopold Greenberg. It was designed by FLH Fleming, the Diocesan architect of the Anglican Church, who also operated in an architectural partnership with Sir Herbert Baker. He designed some of Johannesburg's great landmark buildings, including St Mary's Cathedral.

What needed to change about the house? The house was in an acceptable living condition but during the mid-century a number of unsympathetic renovations were carried out that ruined the planning and created awkward spaces within.

These additions did not reflect the architectural language of the house and distracted from the original style.

What was your design concept? The original home did not flow well. To accommodate a contemporary lifestyle the rooms were opened up where necessary, although the original building was kept central to the extended home's design. No real outdoor living space existed, so a large terrace was added, which extends into the garden. The house successfully integrates the landscape with the use of courtyards and stone retaining walls. Details intrinsic to the original house have been thoroughly incorporated throughout the additions, and design characteristics are maintained.

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