

# OUTOFSITE

A Philip Watermeyer & Mason-designed home in Johannesburg's northern suburbs rather curiously defies definition

Antique botanical prints, framed by HMF Frames, hang in the gallery overlooking the courtyard. Travertine flooring from Corporate & Kales, is used throughout the home. The Victorian oak console table is from Lighton Morris Antiques

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Society decorator Julia Twigg says that she's allergic to theme-park houses, expressing her view on the Johannesburg inclination towards prepackaged takeaway lifestyles. She's discussing her recently completed installations in this northern suburbs home – without the slightest trace of sniffles or watery eyes.

Allergies aside, it might still be argued that the house utilises certain aspects of Far Eastern tropical architecture – if only through its use of open-air, indoor-outdoor pavilion-style living. But it's not an 'island home'. And one might also suggest that there are the influences of southern Europe in its grounded relation to application and site.


Ultimately, the home is multifaceted. It offers a casual living space in an elegant package, perfectly suited to its site and the owners' lifestyles. The house works on different levels, literally and figuratively. The owners are a young professional couple, with two children and two equally fast-paced careers.

'Our brief was fairly straightforward,' say the owners. 'We wanted a family home. A big, central open-plan living space with volume and exposed trusses. We didn't want a proliferation of small spaces, like a separate dining room or study, as we had in our previous home.'

It's designed in a near classic U-shape, with two double-storey pavilions embracing an upper-deck pool and lower level courtyard. Its two pavilions or 'wings' aren't parallel, but are rather pitched at slight outward-facing angles, maximising the sightlines and sense of perspective towards the swimming pool and into the garden beyond. The structure is cut into a downward slope, giving ▶

**BELOW** The curtains in the sitting room are 'Opera' silk taffeta from The Mavromac Studio Collection from Mavromac. The porcelain Chinese parrots on the mantelpiece are from BCI Fine Art **OPPOSITE** The walls in the library are painted in 'String' by Farrow & Ball





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the impression of a single-storey home from the front or street level; its double-volume proportions are only noticeable from the home's sides and rear.

A conservatory space flanks the front, serving as a street-level entrance while linking the two upper living areas. The upper level of the first pavilion contains a large open-plan kitchen and informal living area, with the main bedroom tucked underneath. A soundproofed music room, complete with home theatre, is also tucked below the kitchen area, linked by a discreet circular staircase which opens onto the lower courtyard level. The upper level of the second pavilion houses a more formal sitting room and library, with the children's bedrooms on its lower level.

'Our home has wonderful character,' say the owners. 'We also love the fact that it maximises the quality of the views, as the living areas are on the upper level. The spaces have been designed to provide a sense of openness and tranquility in our day-to-day living.'

The bedroom placement has practical implications as well – their positioning on the lower level ensures they remain cool throughout the Highveld's eight-month summer, while underfloor heating wards off any potential winter chill.

'In our opinion,' say the owners, 'Philip Watermeyer & Mason are South Africa's best domestic architects. They came in, looked at the site and worked from there. And they simply got it right, the first time around. It has soul,' they continue, 'and it's very open and informal. It's contemporary with its relaxed outlook, but classic in its elegance.'

Its success lies in the fact that it's subtly refined, not overly defined. ▶

**OPPOSITE** The shutters in the alcove off the kitchen are by American Shutters RIGHT, TOP The tablecloth and chair cushions are in 'Durban' check from Mavromac **BOTTOM** The owner is a former professional chef, so the kitchen was all-important. All cabinetry is by Woodhouse Manufacturers





**OPPOSITE** The upper-deck loggia overlooking the pool creates an indoor-outdoor pavilion-style living area **ABOVE** The cabinets in the music room were custom-built by Woodhouse Manufacturers and are based on antique Chinese pieces. The stairs lead to the kitchen **BELOW** The tiles on the loggia roof are coal-fired clay, by Briti Tiles ■

