



SOFT TOUCH

A breathtaking contemporary home in Paarl is all about offering its progressive owners a sense of 'barefoot luxury'

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OPPOSITE The internal courtyard of Regardt and Marili Scharrighuisen's Pearl Valley home in the Western Cape brings natural materials, shapes and textures indoors. THIS PAGE A stacked timber log installation above the fireplace in the formal sitting area adds textured warmth and works as a visual feature, too.

SENSORY HOME

The Caesarstone staircase and bar counters are deliciously cool and smooth underfoot, and to the touch. The soft leather bar stools are from OKHA (okha.com). OPPOSITE, FROM TOP A 3m-long waney-edged French oak

table by One Good Turn (onegoodturn.co.za) takes pride of place in the dining area; the cathedral-like, double-volume space is grounded by an extensive limed oak floor, which can be seen from the suspended office.



We all know walls can't talk, but there's a growing awareness that they – and every other architectural or design feature in our homes with which we're in daily contact – definitely do *feel*... They can be hard, cold and unwelcoming to touch, or luxuriant to caress. They can subtly elevate our mood through the sensory pleasures they bring, or wear us down.

This physical feel is something Regardt and Marili Scharrighuisen prioritised when creating their dream home at Paarl's exclusive Pearl Valley golfing estate, where they live with their four-year-old son, Sebastian, and newborn daughter, Mila.

The initial architectural footprint of the house was designed by Gauteng-based architect Gardiol Bergenthuin and when the time came to focus on the living space inside, interiors architects Mark Rielly and Jon Case of Antoni Associates (the interior design and decor division of Cape Town architectural firm SAOTA) was brought in, along with the firm's interior designer, Ashleigh Gilmour. As ideas for the look of the house developed, so did the attention paid to its feel, but throughout the process, Regardt and Marili remained unaware that they were taking their place among a small and very exclusive club of natural trendsetters: those who believe the notion that the tactile aspects of our living space may deserve as much, if not more, considered attention as the visual.

With Mark, Jon and Ashleigh on board, the philosophy quickly developed and its physical translation was progressively stamped into the very bones of the building. The decision was made to avoid all gimmicky and artificial elements and instead to emphasise natural, organic materials such as stone, timber, linen and leather. The other important choice was to draw on the age-old elemental forces of water, fire, air and earth – witnessed most obviously in the waterfalls flanking the entrance, the two long fireplaces and outdoor boma bar with its fire pit, the airy internal courtyard, and stone features such as the large table on the veranda.

'The move towards incorporating natural materials into contemporary design is definitely a trend that we're going to be seeing a lot more of,' says Mark. 'Even just introducing one natural material, most effectively timber, can create a pleasingly tactile quality that adds dimension and enriches daily living. In fact, the new homeliness and warmth of recent contemporary architecture is largely due to its embracing the use of wood,' he says.

Marili and Regardt's home showcases many different uses of timber, from limed oak flooring to Japanese-inspired vertical and horizontal slatted wooden cladding, and even two dramatic statement walls that are entirely clad in timber.

Both single out the roofed veranda's timber-slatted ceiling as their favourite aspect. 'It has a very Zen feeling about it, and it far exceeded our expectations,' says Marili. 'It also seems to fascinate little Mila – I think it's her favourite part of the house, too – she can't keep her eyes off it!' (Sebastian's favourite part of the house, incidentally, is where the pool furniture's cushions are stored: he loves making his own house with the soft furnishings and never tires of the game.) Mark characterises this new trend as one of 'barefoot luxury', which sums it up nicely. If you don't understand it, just watch Marili as she walks through the door after work, kicks off her shoes, wriggles her toes, and gives in to the delicious sensation of rubbing the soles of her feet along the silky smooth patina unique to an authentic and carefully crafted timber floor. □

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