

M.V.D.M.

A R C H I T E C T S

Purpose • Empathy • Clarity



VOL. 1

STUDIO OVERVIEW

With a presence in Plettenberg Bay, the Karoo, Pretoria and Sydney, the studio weaves African roots and a global perspective into every project.

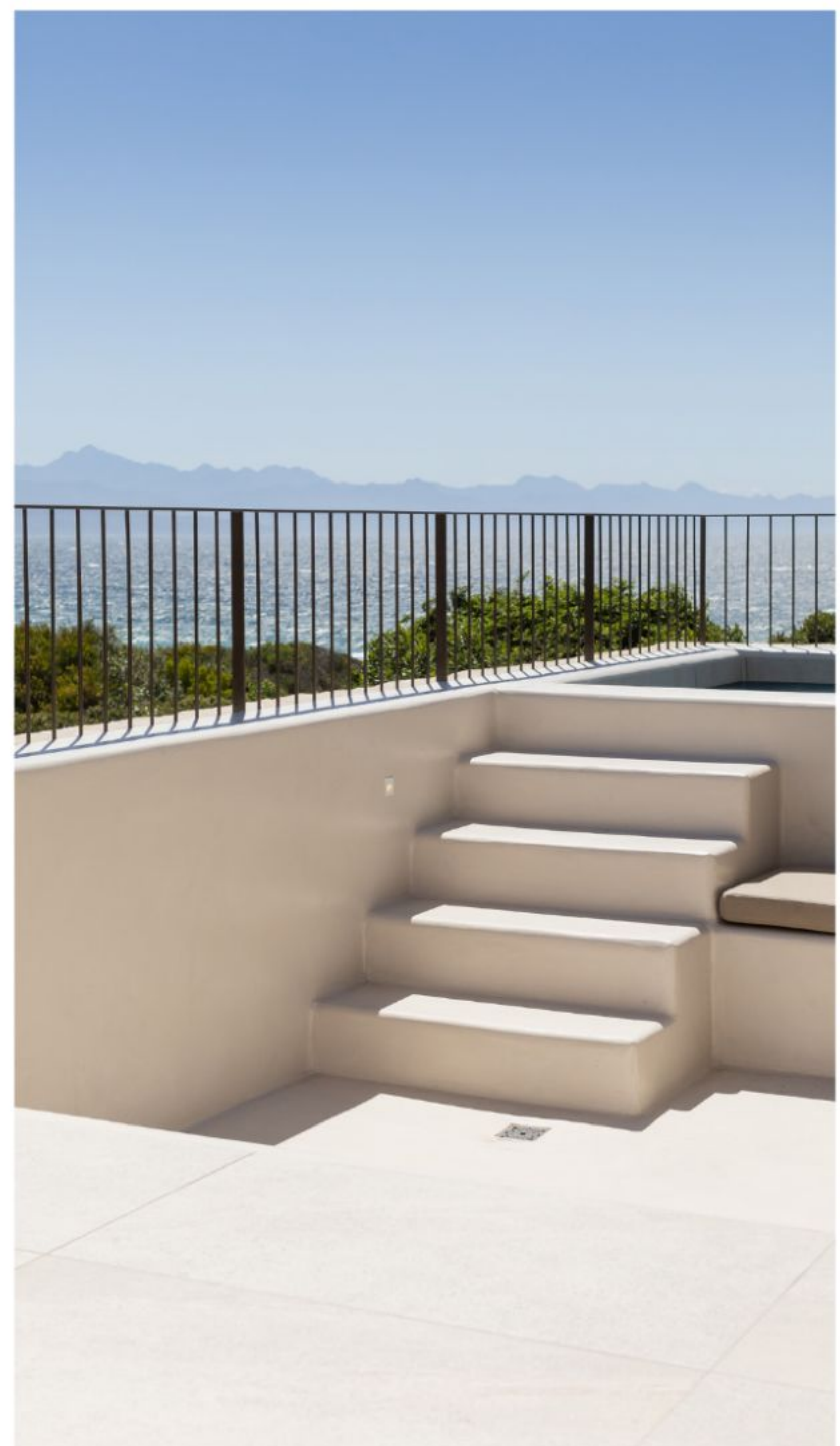
M.V.D.M Architects

is a global architecture studio led by Marielise van der Merwe. The studio's focus is on creating unique architecture that emerges from place, process and trust. Crafting spaces that uplift lives, executed with integrity and simple beauty.

From the Karoo to Sydney, each project is an invitation to help clients to live better: more considered, more conscious, more in tune with the light and landscape and be in harmony with their surroundings .

The studio designs homes, retreats, workspaces and cultural places that feel both inevitable and surprising, as if they have always belonged to their setting, yet opening up entirely new ways of living in it.

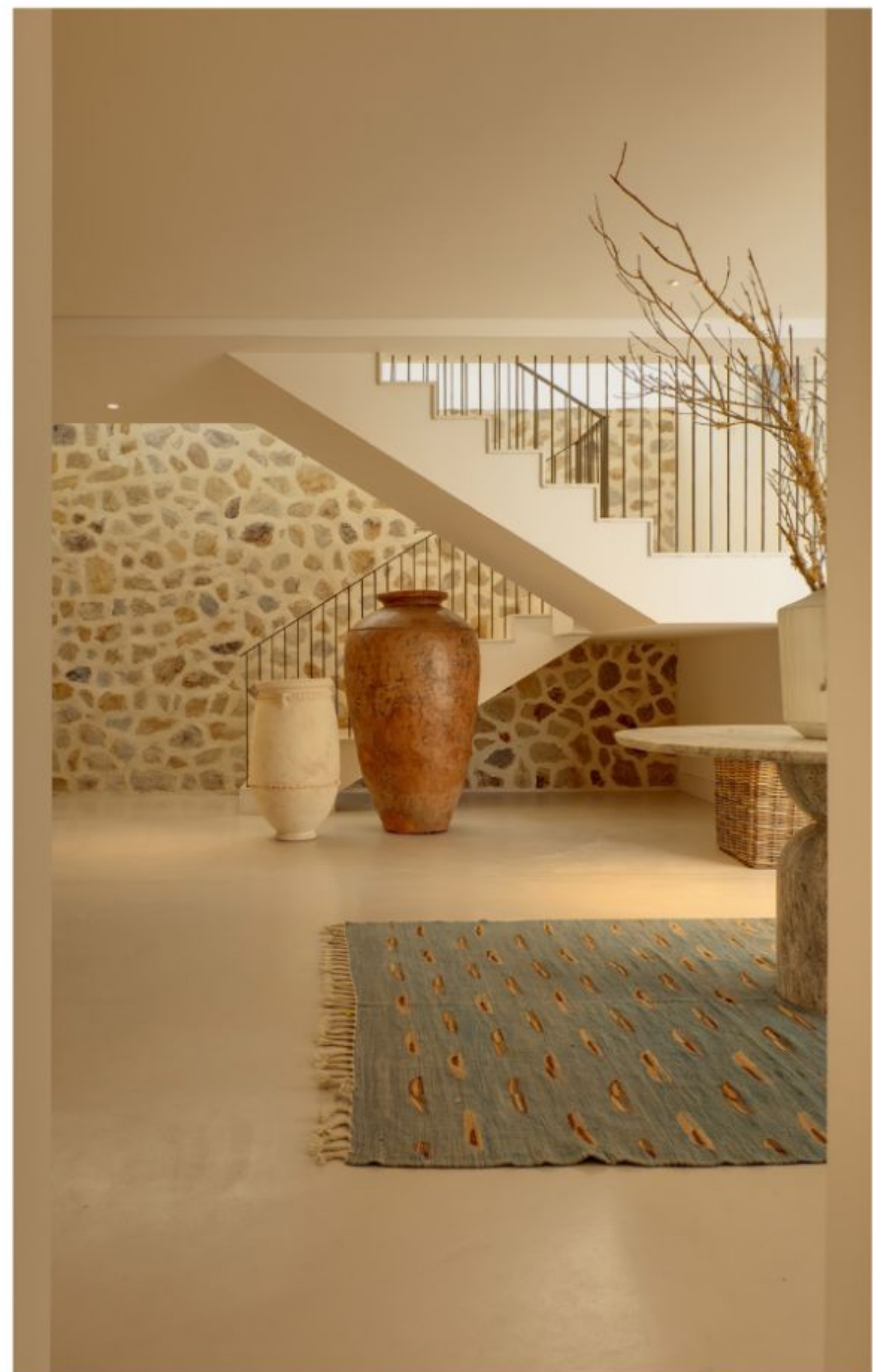
Guided by design excellence, sustainability and integrity, M.V.D.M Architects balances bold, cutting-edge ideas with grounded practicality. Clients are invited into a collaborative process where dreams are honoured, budgets are respected, and the final spaces quietly exceed expectation.



CASA PB

Project type: Coastal family home

Location: Plettenberg Bay, South Africa









ABOUT THE PRACTICE

For Marielise, architecture was never just a career choice; it was a language she grew up speaking. Childhood site meetings with her architect father, art and interior shows with her mother, and sketchbooks filled with buildings rather than people laid the foundation for a life in design.

Today, M.V.D.M Architects draws on that lifelong immersion to create spaces that feel deeply human. The studio rests on a simple conviction: good architecture should change lives and circumstances for the better, not only functionally, but on a subtle, emotional, even subconscious level.

Whether working on a coastal family home, a regenerative farm lodge, a city apartment or a contemplative retreat, the practice treats each commission as a once-off opportunity: to listen, to understand and to design a setting where everyday life becomes more beautiful and more possible.

This next chapter for M.V.D.M Architects is about weaving together many strands – colours, continents and lives, into an even more colourful and meaningful journey.

PHILOSOPHY & VALUES

“Design Excellence. Sustainability. Integrity”

Design Excellence

according to the classic Vitruvian principles requires that a building is functional, durable and beautiful. At M.V.D.M Architects we believe that a building should also inspire a sense of awe, wonder and surprise.

Sustainability

is a comprehensive design philosophy aimed at minimising a building’s negative environmental impact while enhancing the social and economic well-being of its occupants and local community.

Integrity

serves as the ethical “compass” that ensures design promises are genuinely fulfilled across the project’s lifespan. With reference to honesty in material use, ethical consistency and structural and professional accountability.

M.V.D.M Architects holds that life is beautiful and the buildings we create should be as much a work of art as being functional. All design should be innovative yet deeply human.

“These are not slogans; they are working principles.”



Twin
Residences

Project type: Coastal family homes
Location: Plettenberg Bay, South Africa











PURPOSE, EMPATHY & CLARITY

These three words form the foundation of the studio's design approach to human centric design:

PURPOSE

Defines why a space is created and its functional, social, or, emotional goals. The outcome at M.V.D.M Architects is focused on meaningful design which has contextual relevance and long-term utility.

EMPATHY allows the architect to “step into the users’ shoes”, anticipating, their experiences and emotions within a space. It goes further to understanding unspoken needs, co-design and participation involving the client and / or end-users. A project may be functional, but it only truly fulfills its purpose when conceived through the lens of empathy. It’s empathy that transforms a good design into a great one, ensuring that the space not only serves its function but also resonates deeply with its users.

CLARITY is the ability to make the purpose of the design obvious, creating spaces that are intuitive, functional, and uncluttered. It provides a sense of calm and structure, making it easier for users to interact with their environment.



St Ives

Project type: Urban renovation

Location: Sydney, Australia





PERSONALITY & AESTHETIC

Bold lines. Playful details. Deep humanity.

M.V.D.M Architects occupies a rare middle ground:

- Bold and cutting-edge — not for shock value, but to push past the predictable.
- Practical and simple — distilling complexity into clear forms and legible plans.
- Playful — a flash of leopard print, a golden handrail catching late afternoon light, a framed view that feels like land art.

The studio knows when to insist on pure design principles and when to bend, gently, to a client's deeply personal wish. Authenticity lies in that balance: excellence without rigidity, personality without noise.

House
Whales
Haven

Project type: Renovation coastal family home
Location: Keurboomstrand, South Africa





OUR PROCESS

From first sketch to final handover, every project follows a considered, collaborative journey:

1. Listening & Discovery

Conversations, site visits and research reveal the client's story, aspirations, constraints and non-negotiables. This is where trust is built — and where the true brief emerges beneath the initial wish list.

2. Concept & Narrative

A clear design story is crafted: how the building sits in its landscape or streetscape, how light moves through it, how people will inhabit it from dawn to dusk. Early sketches and models explore options while keeping the narrative intact.

3. Design Development

Plans, sections and elevations are refined; materials and structural systems are selected for both beauty and performance. Sustainability is embedded from the outset: passive strategies, appropriate technologies and long-life, low-maintenance solutions.

4. Technical Resolution

Detailed drawings, specifications and coordination with engineers and specialists ensure that the design can be built faithfully — and sensibly. Clever, constructible details respect both budgets and timelines.

5. On-site Presence & Completion

The studio stays closed during construction, bridging the gap between concept and craft. Decisions are made in real time, with both design integrity and contractor realities in mind. The goal: a project that feels even better in person than on paper.

Throughout, clients are treated as collaborators rather than passengers. The process is structured, but the dialogue remains open and human.

WHAT WE DESIGN

M.V.D.M Architects works across a curated range of project types, with a consistent emphasis on human experience and contextual sensitivity:

PRIVATE RESIDENCES & HOLIDAY HOMES

Coastal retreats, city homes and countryside houses that honour both family dynamics and the character of place.

REGENERATIVE RURAL & FARM PROJECTS

Farmhouses, share-block retreats, conservation lodges and working landscapes where architecture, ecology and livelihood intertwine.

BOUTIQUE HOSPITALITY & RETREAT SPACES

Guesthouses, wellness retreats and small hotels conceived as immersive experiences rather than generic accommodation.

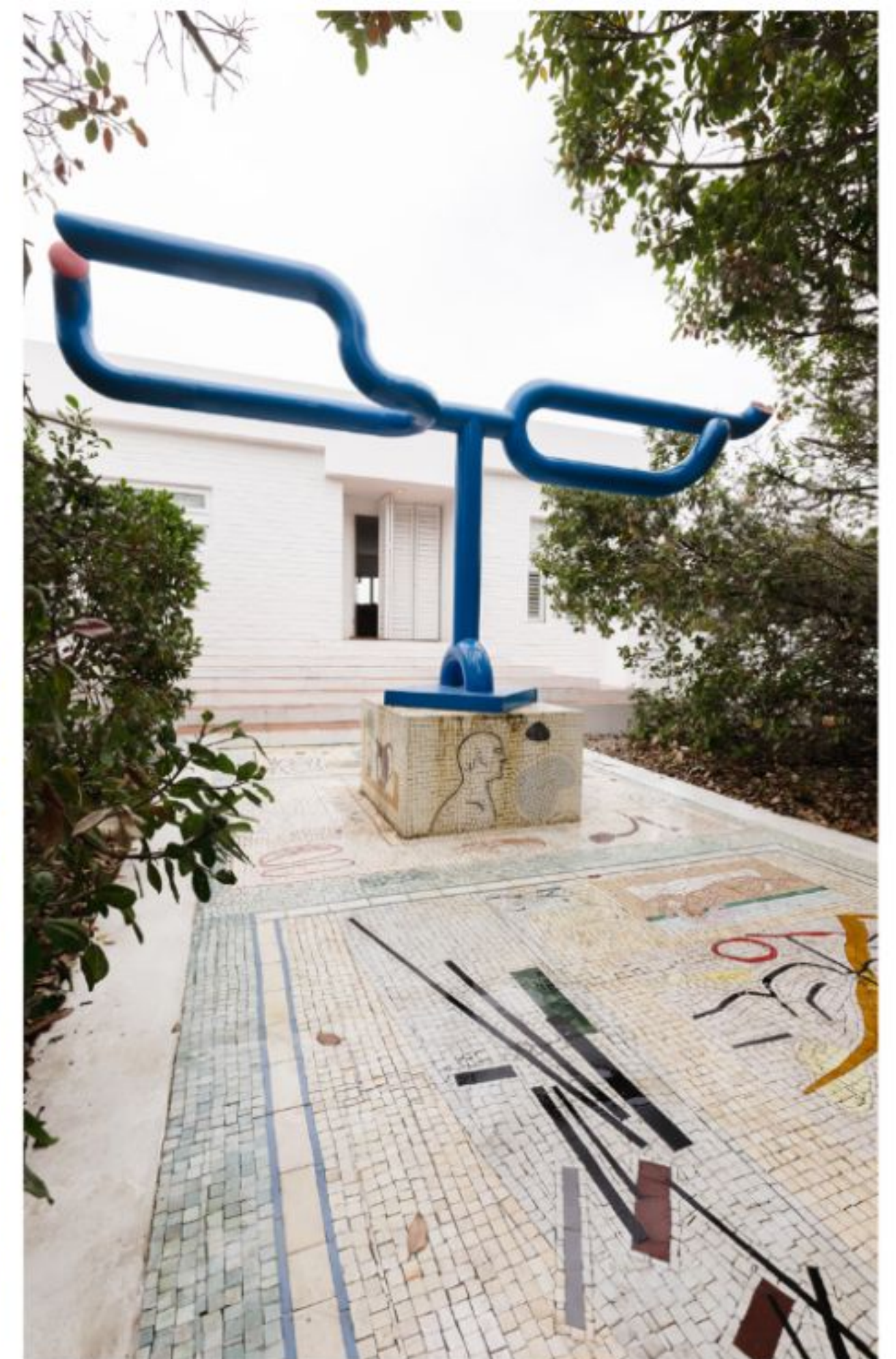
WORKSPACES & CREATIVE STUDIOS

Offices and studios that support focus, collaboration and wellbeing — environments where people genuinely want to come to work.

CULTURAL & COMMUNITY SPACES

Galleries, event sheds, multi-use halls and public rooms that invite gathering, performance and shared memory.

Each commission is treated as a prototype: a tailored response to context, rather than a template applied from one site to the next.







Wahroonga

Project type: Urban renovation

Location: Sydney, Australia



SUSTAINABILITY & RESPONSIBILITY

M.V.D.M Architects works across a curated range of project types, with a consistent emphasis on human experience and contextual sensitivity:

1. PRIVATE RESIDENCES & HOLIDAY HOMES

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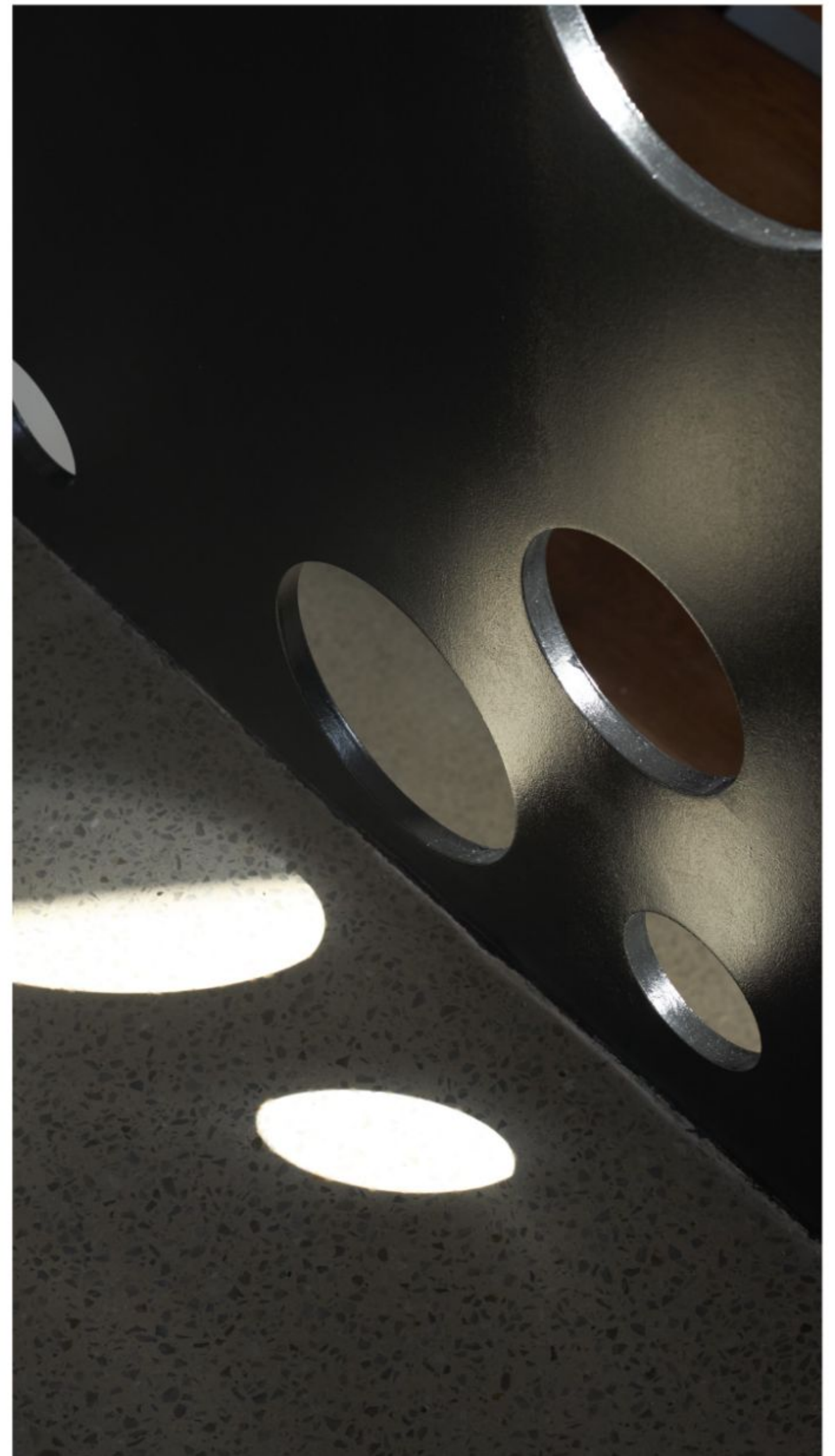
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4. WORKSPACES & CREATIVE STUDIOS

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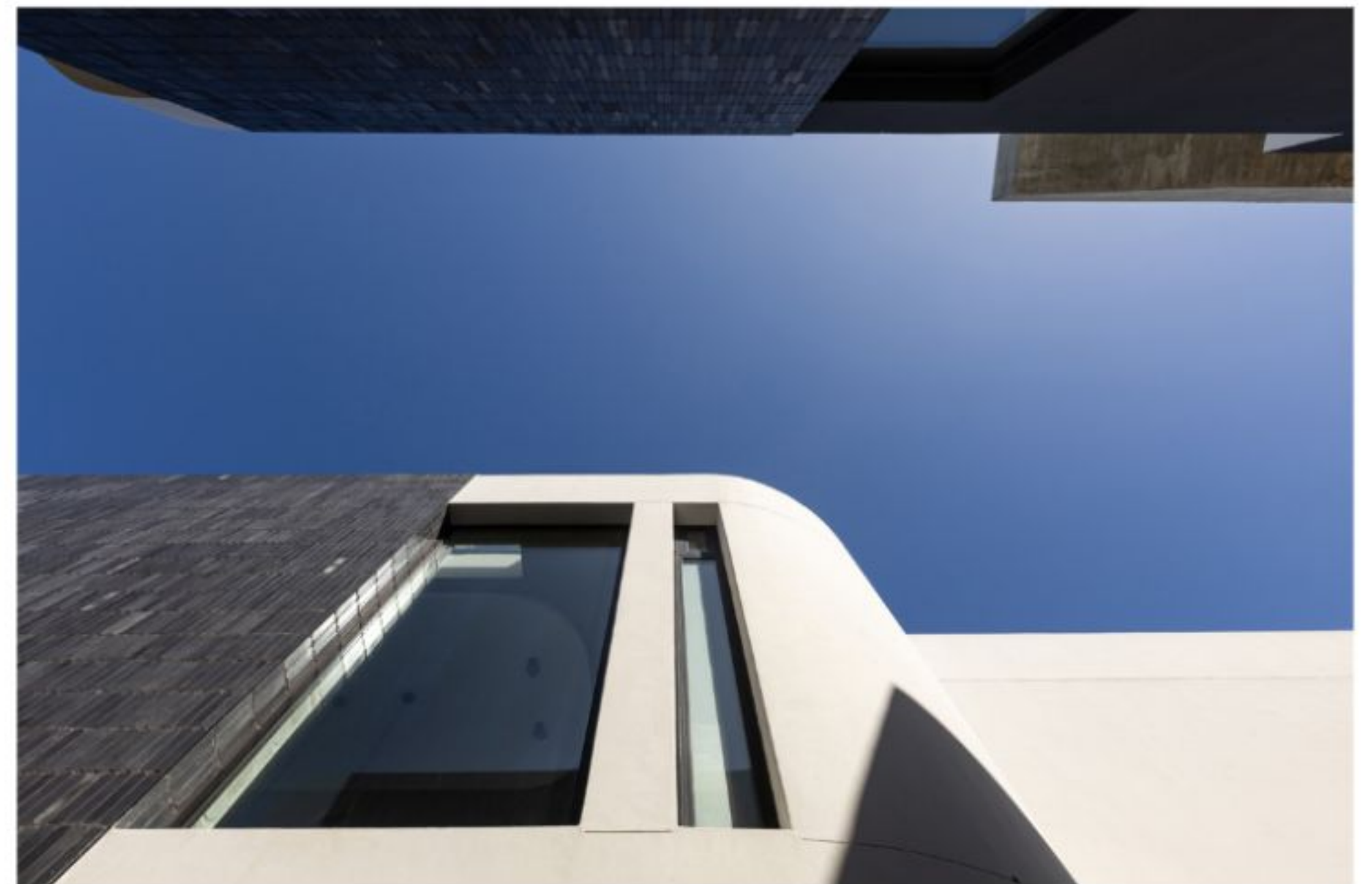
M.V.D.M. ARCHITECTS

| VOL 1

THE CLIENT EXPERIENCE

Clients often describe the process with M.V.D.M Architects as life-changing. They feel:

- Understood – their fears and desires are heard, not dismissed.
- Respected – budgets and constraints are treated as creative parameters, not irritations.
- Delighted – the finished space reveals possibilities they did not know how to ask for.



The highest compliment is not just, “It’s beautiful,” but, “It feels like us — only better.”



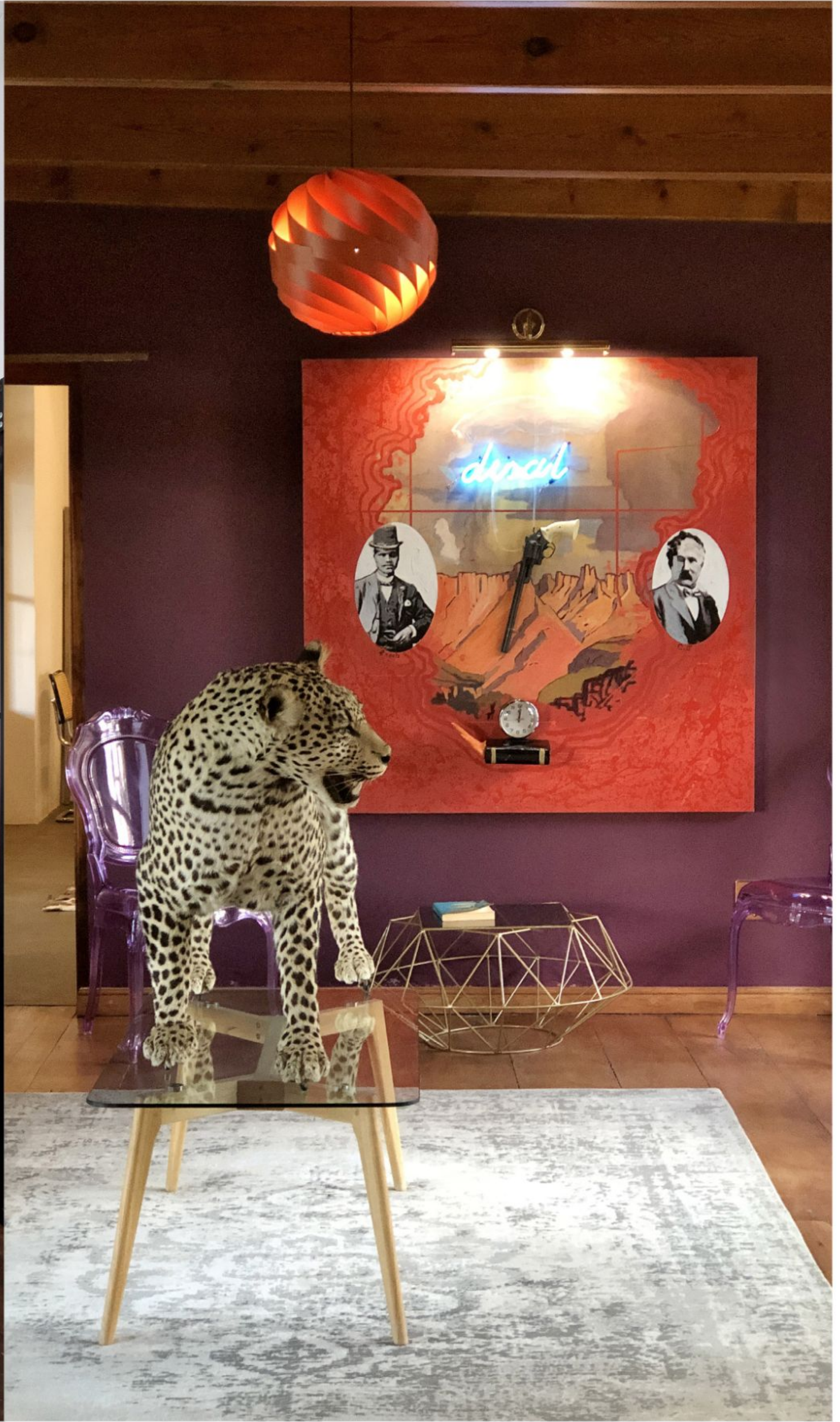
De Aap
Farm
Lodge

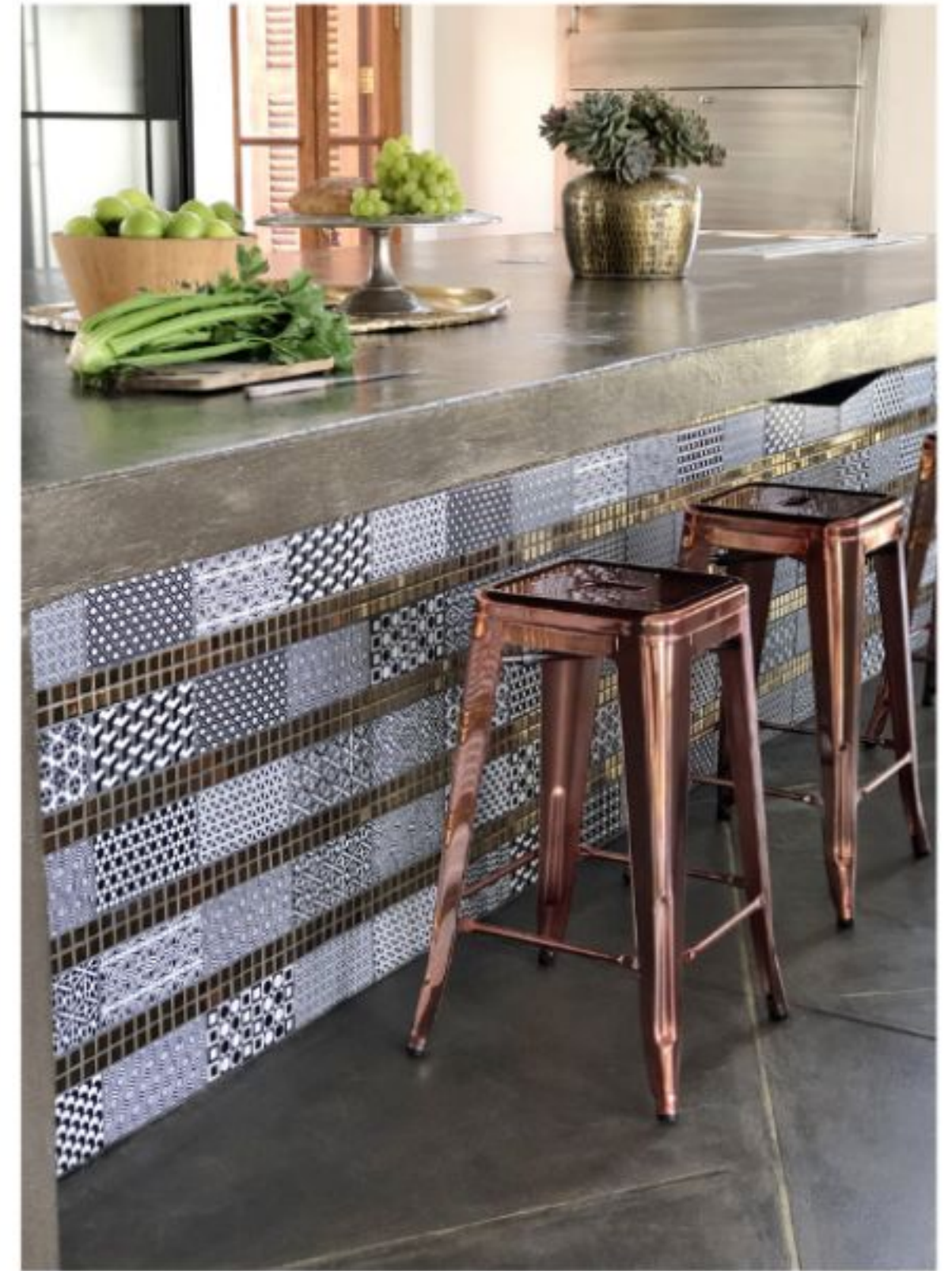
Project type: Countryside getaway

Location: Prince Albert district- Karoo, South Africa

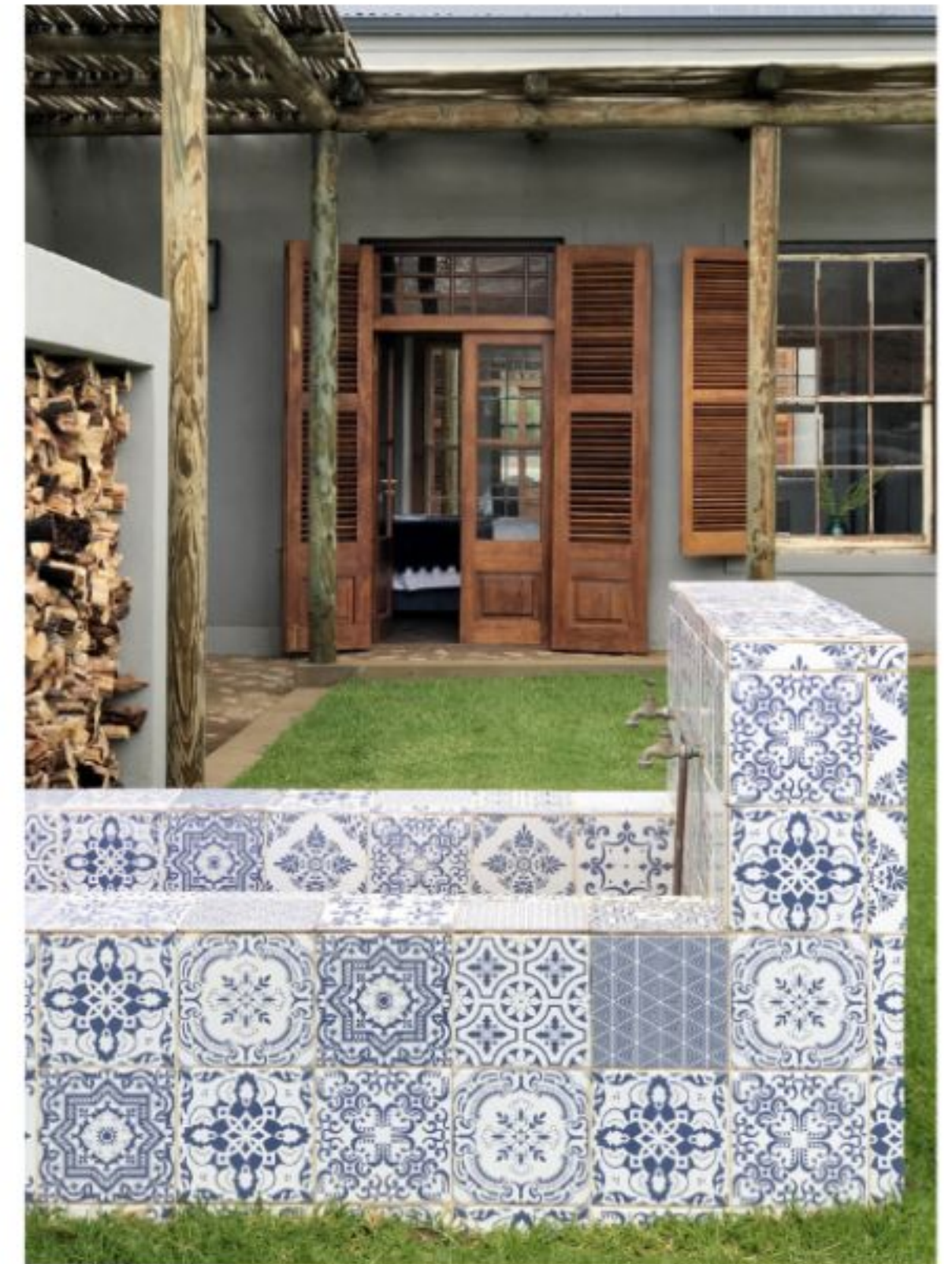
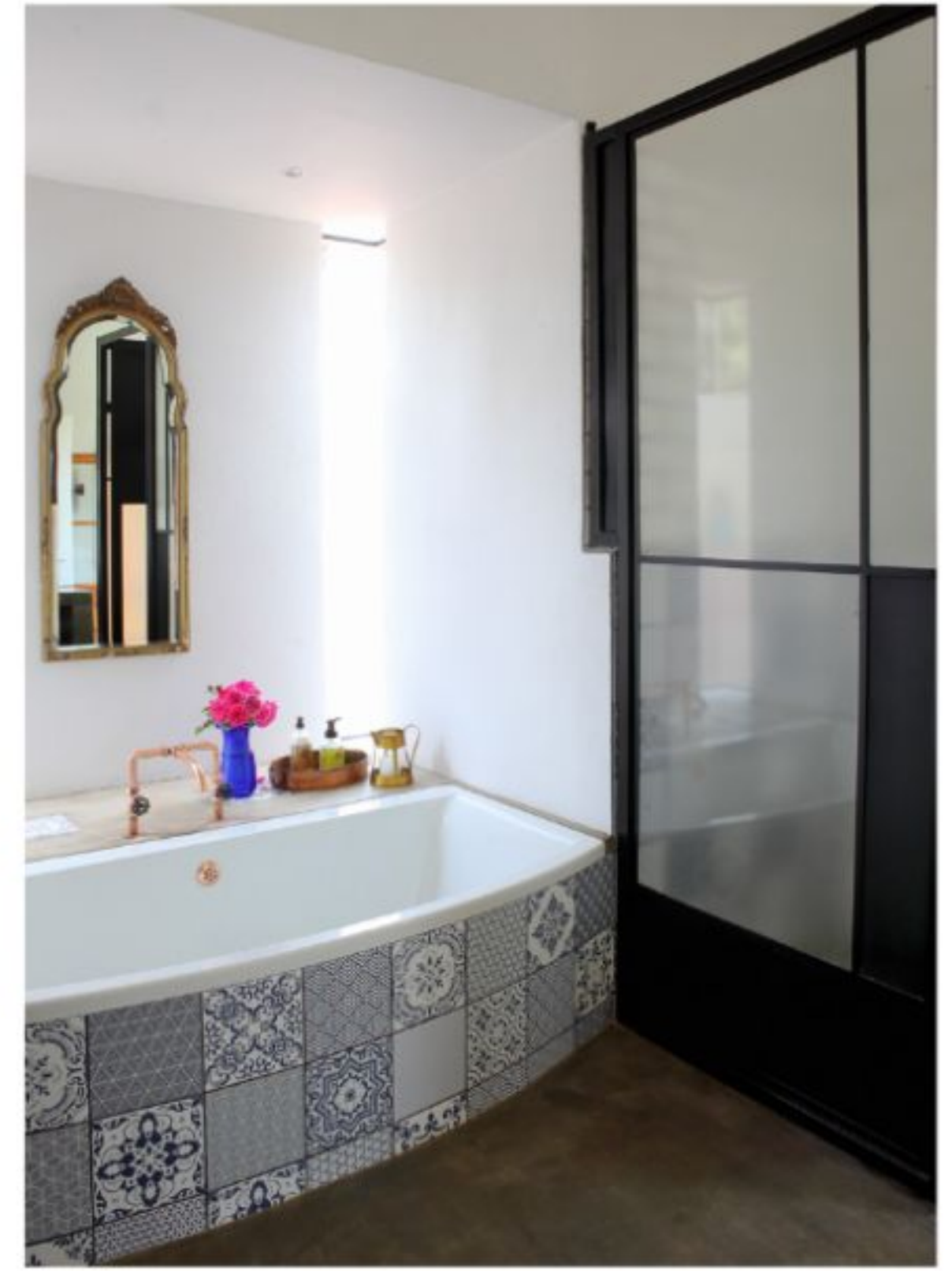




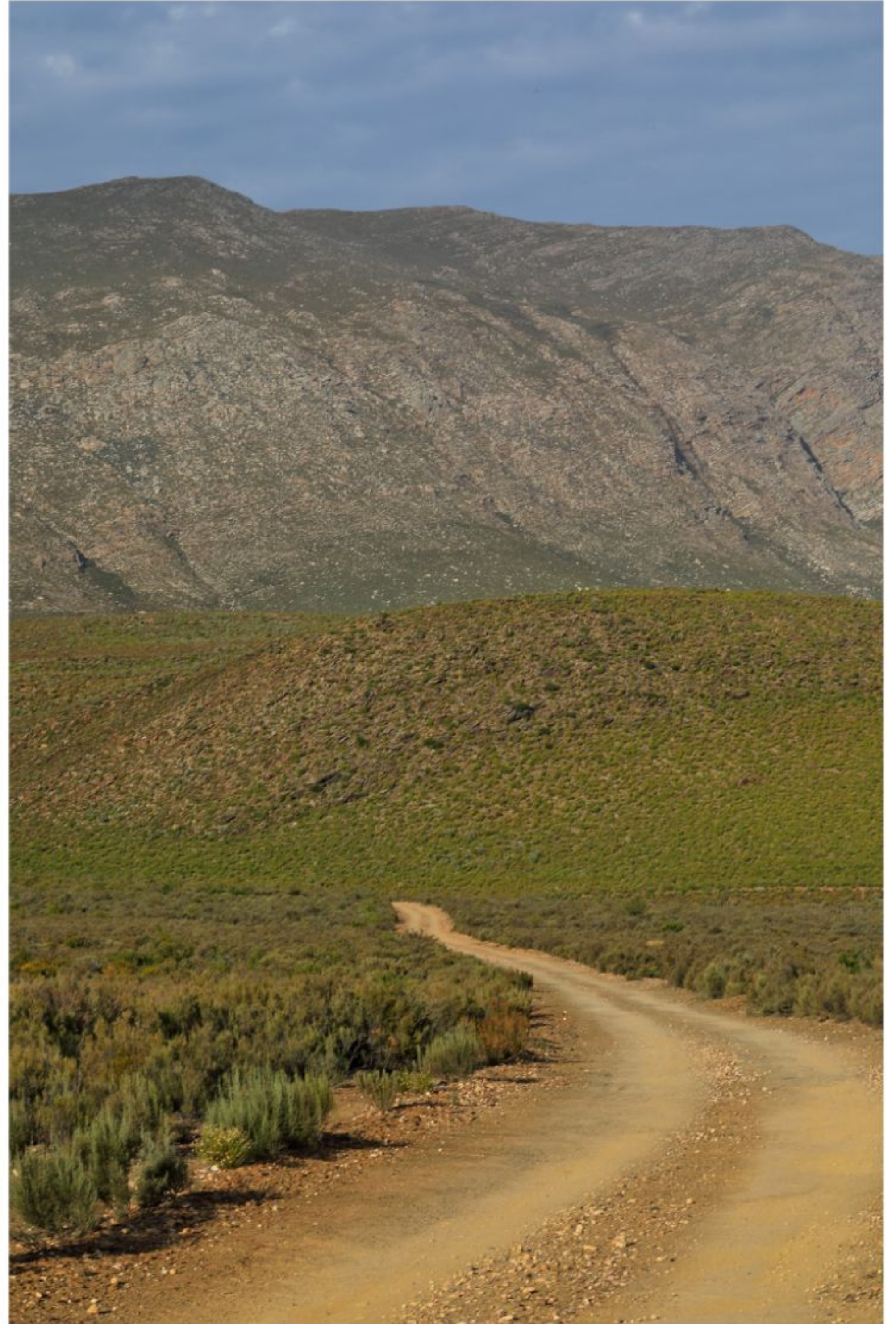










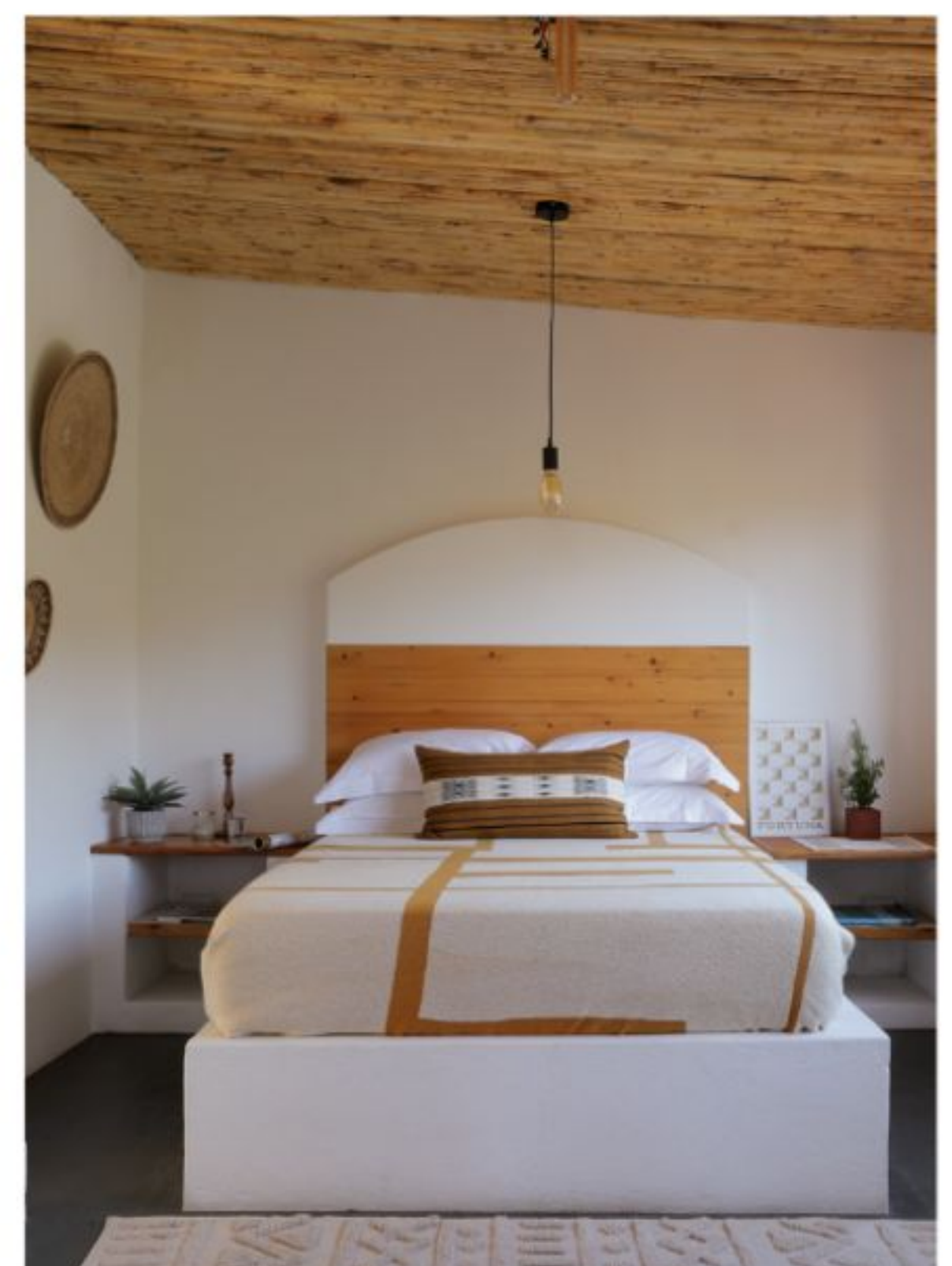
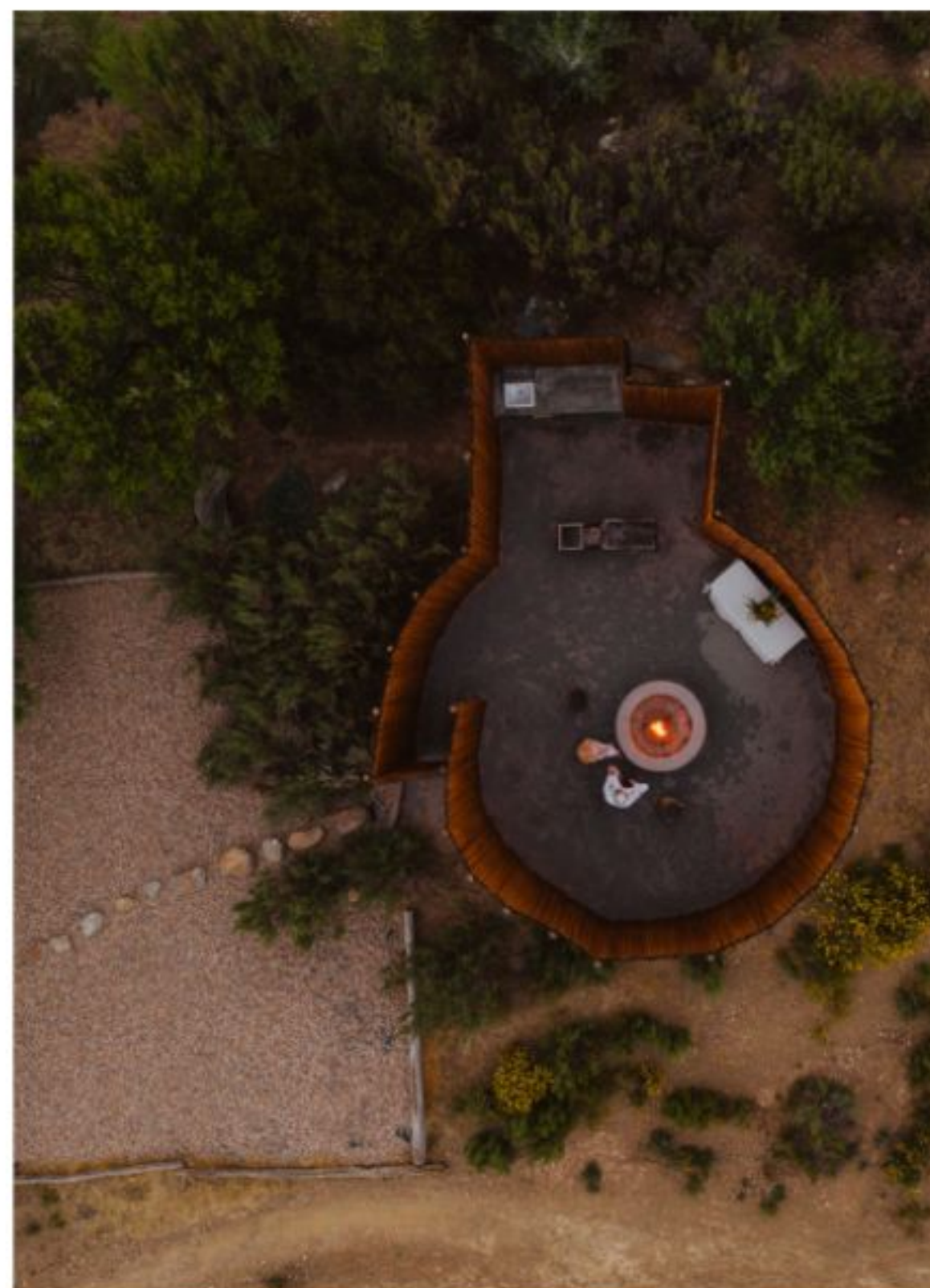
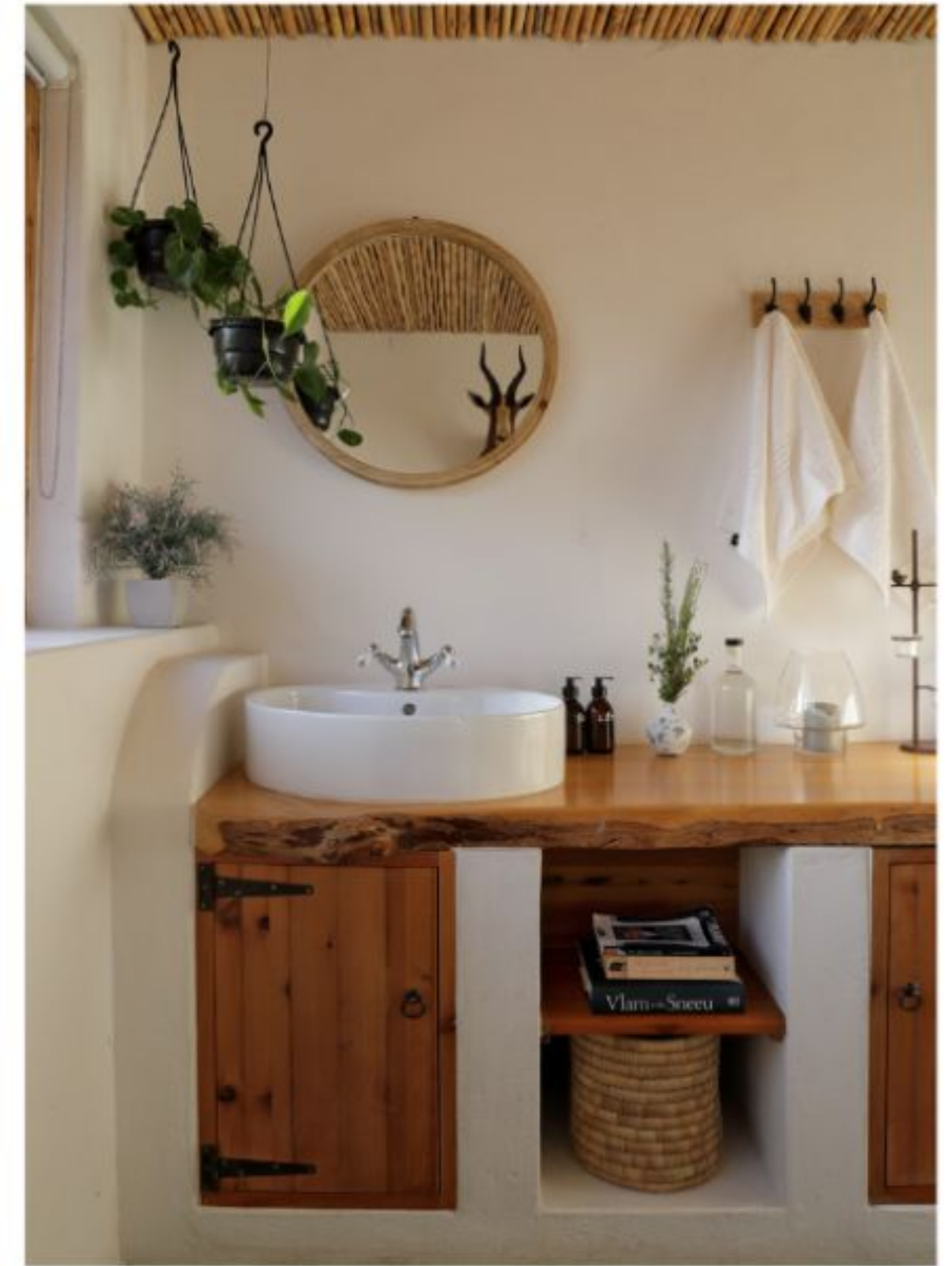


Shepherd's
Cottage

Project type: Countryside getaway

Location: Prince Albert district – Karoo, South Africa







Practice Details & CONTACTS

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Pr. Arch # 6512 (South Africa) .

Marielise Van Der Merwe

ARCHITECTURE

A refined, human-centred practice by Marielise Van Der Merwe
bold, playful and practical design that uplifts everyday life.



M.V.D.M.

PRETORIA
PLETTENBERG BAY
SYDNEY

New website & portfolio launching soon. For projects, collaborations and media requests, please get in touch.

ARCHITECTURE
FOR
LIGHT,
LIFE &
STILLNESS.

ABOUT US

We design spaces that feel inevitable - clear lines, generous light, and calm proportions. Guided by passion, innovation and forward thinking, our work balances pure design with real-world pragmatism to deliver outcomes beyond expectation.

WHAT WE DO

Residential • Hospitality • Retail • Workplace • Interior Architecture
• Adaptive Re-use & Alterations • Experience-led Environments