

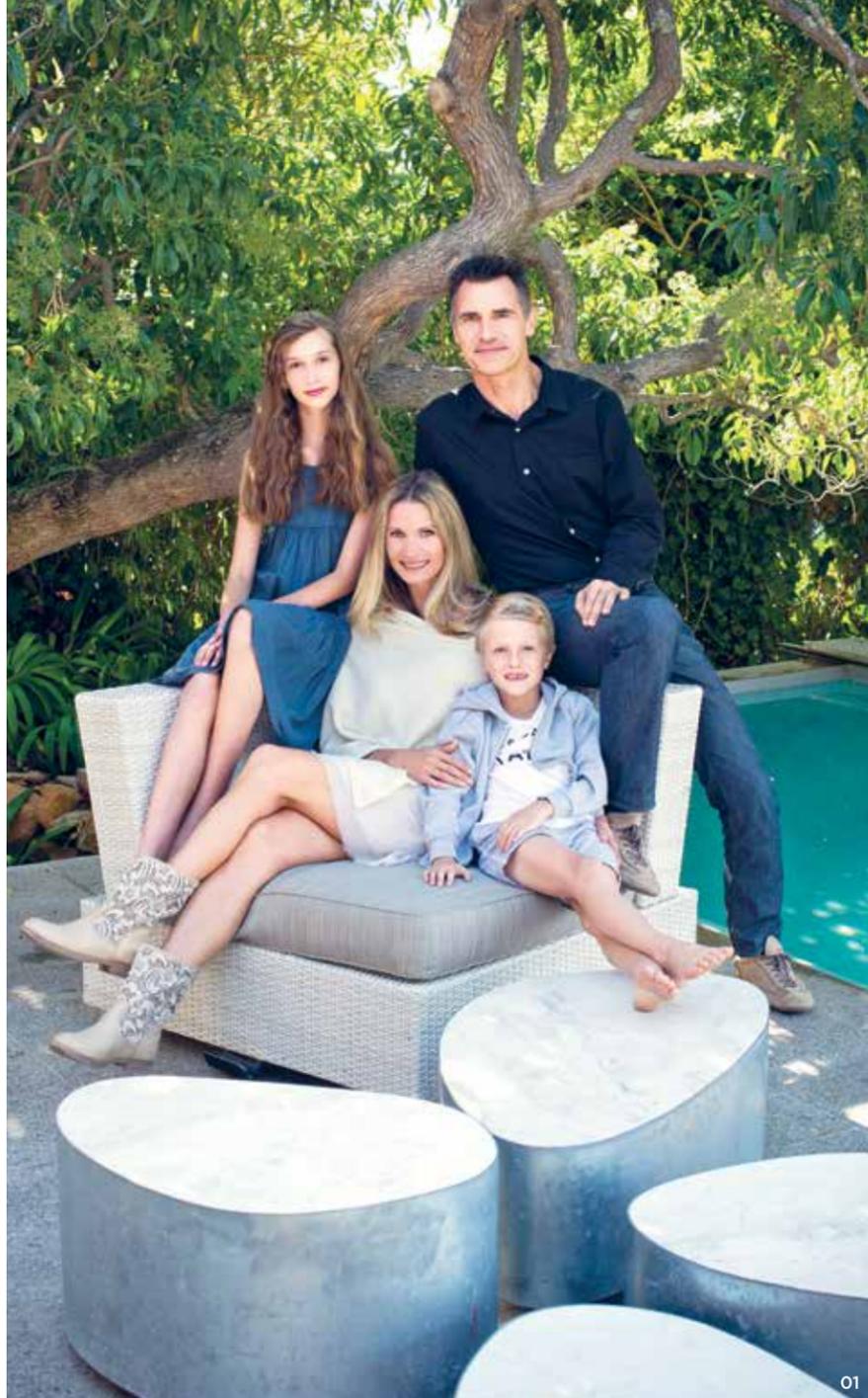


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An architect bought a house designed by another notable architect, who **BASED IT ON THE ICONIC HOME OF ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS ARCHITECTS EVER.**  
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01

# CLEAR AND PRESENT



01

# WHEN STEFAN ANTONI

heard that a certain house in Higgovale was for sale, he absolutely had to take a look. That particular house is well known among Stefan's fellow architects in Cape Town for three reasons: One, it is quite simply a gorgeous house

in a sought-after neighbourhood; two, Gilbert Colyn, who was responsible for the landmark Absa building in the Cape Town CBD, designed it; and three, Colyn based his design on the famous Glass House of Philip Johnson, built in 1949, and Johnson is famous for working with Mies van der Rohe on the Seagram building in New York, a modernist masterpiece that inspired the Absa building.

The main core of the house in Higgovale is an open-plan, almost entirely transparent structure, singularly suited to inhaling magnificent views over Table Bay. When Stefan first viewed it, the house had been neglected for some time. He knew it would require a lot of

work to coax the soul back into the place. But that did not deter him. It was a challenge wrapped in a sense of professional obligation. An opportunity to remake history.

"The house was not protected," says Stefan, "so if it were to fall into the wrong hands it could have been pulled down. And not many of these houses from the '60s remain; it's a rare piece of architecture."

In the spirit of the original Glass House, Stefan merged three rooms to create an enormous open-plan living area. Downstairs he created a spacious den/games room with a roof light. The swimming pool was moved from the back to the front of the house, with a glass panel in the pool providing more light for the den.

The biggest challenge was the ceiling. With so much glass, the ceiling forms the most powerful solid plane in the house, so it was vital to get the right stain for the pine boards. Stefan struggled to get a satisfactory tint. "The ceiling was the one factor beyond my control," he says. So you can imagine his relief when he found a specialist who finally got it spot on.

But the essence of the house remains its transparency. "When I'm playing soccer with my kids in the back garden, I can still see the sea view," says Stefan. Yet they don't really feel the need to lower the shades or close the sliding screens for privacy. The elevation of the house above the road and the neighbours means that taking one or two steps back removes you from public view – without removing the view from you.

Still, the gravitational centre of the house is the back garden, a secluded, lush corner on the slopes of Table Mountain. Stefan points out the trees, in particular some magnificent yellowwoods, and the frogs in the 18m-long water feature he'd had installed. As we watch, three squirrels scamper down to drink some water, as if trained. It wouldn't be surprising. Rumour has it that the Antonis are able to summon a full moon to entertain dinner guests on the front deck.

It's deliciously ironic, really: The most transparent house in Cape Town is also one of the most private, its concealed corners enhanced by the light afforded through layers and layers of glass. In a very real sense, the house is a lived-in conduit for the sweeping views in the front and the leafy nook at the back.

The architectural legacy of this '60s house has not just been preserved – it has been perfected. **V**

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02

## PREVIOUS SPREAD

**01** The Antonis' Higgovale house is much as it was when it was built in 1969. The patio, pool and garden are new additions, allowing the house to open seamlessly to the city-facing side of the property. The Modena outdoor furniture is from Mobelli, and the Pebbles coffee table from OKHA.

## THIS SPREAD

**01** The Antoni family on the pool terrace: Gia, Carla, Luke and Stefan.

**02** In the dining room, an artwork by Ryan Hewett creates a focal point across from the French oak dining table by Pierre Cronje. The DC1 chairs are by OKHA, the Bird Nest pendant lamp was designed by Stefan, and in the corner is a Five Stone floor lamp by Ango. A Jetmaster wood fireplace warms the room in winter.



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- 01** The family room features a Harvey Slope sofa and Liaison coffee table by OKHA and an artwork by Michaela Rinaldi. Stefan bought the hand-blown glass platter by Red Hot Glass at a charity auction.
- 02** The large artwork in the entrance hall is by Martie Kossatz, the Bird chair by Harry Bertioia, the Cesar side table by Minotti and the kelim wall hanging from Morocco.
- 03** In the main bedroom, the bed and Jacket ottomans are by OKHA, and the Tizio lamps on either side of the bed are a design by Richard Sapper for Artemide. The Adelaide bath by Dado is from Lavo Bathroom Concepts.
- 04** A Paul du Toit artwork provides a splash of colour in the lounge. The Jada L-shaped sofa, Movement coffee table on wheels, Burbuja side tables and De Riguour lamp are by OKHA, and the wool rug was custom-made by Rugalia Designer Rugs.
- 04** Daisy the Yorkie sits at the top of the stairwell to the games room. Behind the tree-trunk table in the background is an EA 117 aluminium chair, designed by Charles and Ray Eames for Vitra.



05



**01** On the sea-facing patio, louvred anodised-aluminium screens slide closed to provide shade on a hot, sunny day. The chairs are the original Balducci wicker chairs, bought on a trip to Italy with restaurant owner Ian Halfon.

**03** Modena outdoor furniture from Mobelli and a bowl made of rusted sheet steel from Private Collections form a cosy spot under a yellowwood tree. The paving was done with stone from the site itself.

**04** Luke and a friend look into the games room from the pool. The glass panel and a roof light admit sunlight into the room. The wool rug was custom-made by Rugalia Designer Rugs.

THE ESSENCE OF THE HOUSE REMAINS **ITS TRANSPARENCY.**

