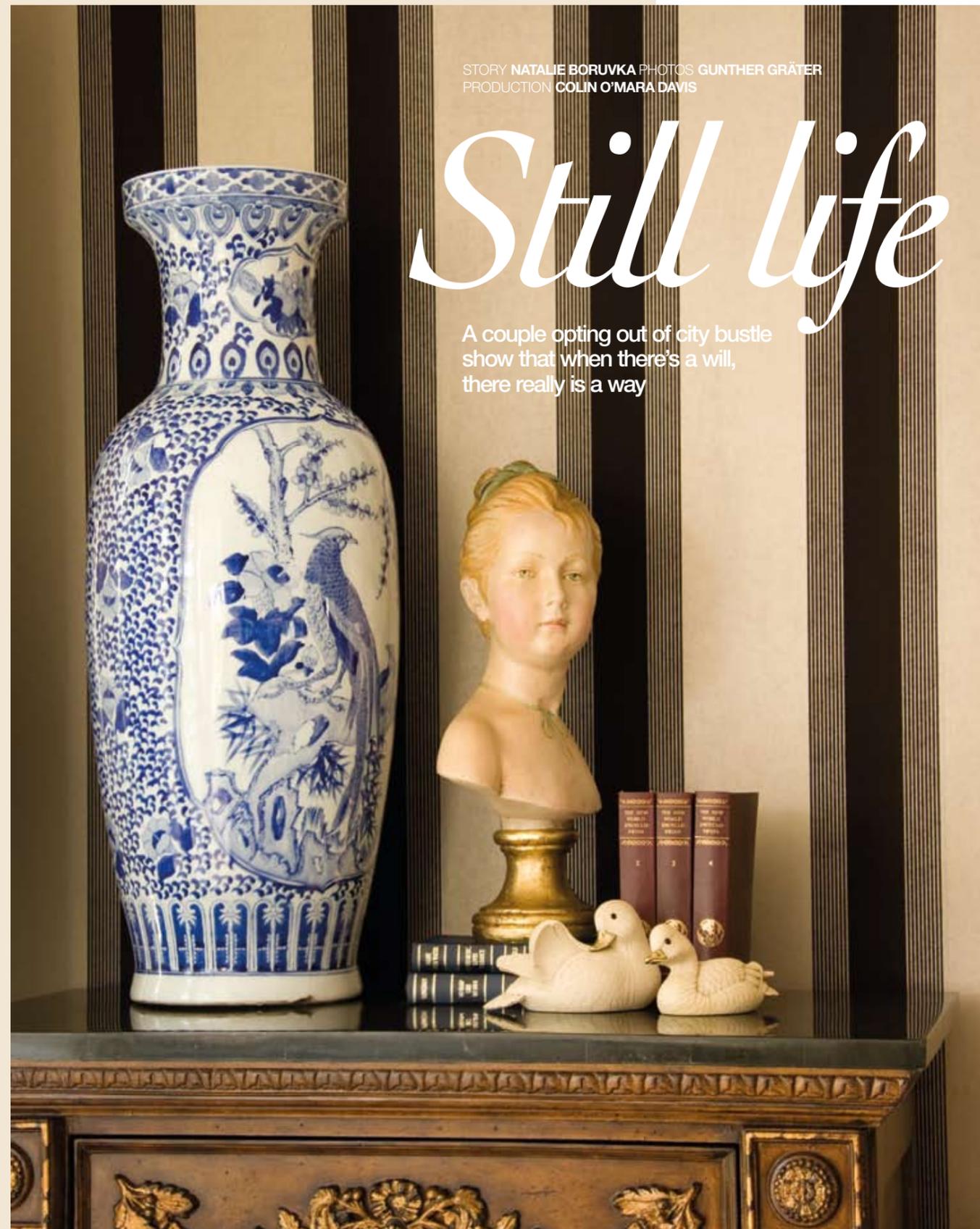




Along the mushroom-coloured staircase wall a dramatic gallery effect has been created with reproductions by artists Hettie Pullinger, Andre de Beer and Lucy Doran.



STORY NATALIE BORUVKA PHOTOS GUNTHER GRÄTER
PRODUCTION COLIN O'MARA DAVIS

Still life

A couple opting out of city bustle show that when there's a will, there really is a way



Pieter and Anneliesa are keen entertainers. Their new home has seen them retreat from the large, elaborate affairs they were once used to, to hosting smaller, more intimate gatherings. Finishes on the patio breach the interior creating a pleasing sense of merging spaces.

The Groblers are in the business of change. The reinvention of a tired look, a dramatic appearance-altering makeover and, for those brave enough, turning the established on its head (so to speak) all form a greater part of each working day spent managing the five Redken premium hair salons – House of Hair Design – they own in the greater Pretoria area. The decision, therefore, to swop their city-based home for the tranquillity and peace of estate living, daunted them in no small way.

‘In our business there’s always a new trend,’ says Austrian-born Anneliesa, Pieter’s wife and business partner. ‘It’s our way of living.’

Lombardy Estates is inspired by the Lombardy region in northern Italy, an area of great sprawling plains of forests that are criss-crossed by rivers and dotted with majestic Alpine lakes. Like its namesake, the 100-hectare estate is idyllic. Expanses of green and lush indigenous landscaping ensconce soothing waterscapes and meandering streams. Fences are conspicuously absent: instead, nature offers the properties privacy with rows of wild olive, acer and fever trees.

The architecture is a dynamic counterpoint to the romantic surrounds. A collaboration of international and local architects, including the award-winning SAOTA (Stefan Antoni Olmesdahl Truen Architects), it is a contemporary take on the low-pitched, horizontal accents of open-plan prairie-style houses.

An artist’s impression in a local newspaper embodied all that Anneliesa envisioned for the lifestyle change they were to make – although Pieter had reservations.

‘When I first saw the house at a stage of early completion, I had a hard time visualising our collection of classical furniture working with the contemporary architecture,’ he recalls.

The Groblers’ penchant for the neo-classical has seen them amass a beautiful and much-loved collection of period pieces that their previous home (a grand old Cape Dutch structure) housed perfectly. It was a dilemma not dissimilar to one which their clients



might face: a sleek, new look that begs for a complete wardrobe overhaul. The challenge Anneliesa and Pieter confronted was conversely parallel: how to make the wardrobe fit the hair?

Necessity proved the mother of reinvention as they turned to their good friend and well-respected Pretoria-based interior designer, Wessel van Deventer, whose brief was to create an entirely new look using all their existing furniture. Knowing that the selection of fabric and the treatment of wall surfaces would be key elements to establishing cohesion, Wessel arrived armed with a barrage of fabric books and wallpaper samples. The decor offensive worked. Succumbing to the array of richly textured fabrics, the Groblers agreed

that a scheme predominant in earth tones – offset against a backdrop of bold stripes – would create the dynamic, fresh setting needed to showcase their prized pieces.

‘All the fabrics and wallpaper samples we were initially shown turned out to be our first and only choice,’ says Anneliesa. ‘We immediately fell in love with everything.’

Without a doubt the walls are the hero elements in the home. The striped wallpaper, in its varied widths and hues, is an engaging graphic binder that, though dominant, imparts a cheerful and whimsical feeling to a home that could easily have been overwhelmed by the weighty opulence of its furnishings. By contrast, the

TOP Bold wallpaper in stripes of varying widths has been installed throughout the home, serving as a key feature and a rhythmic linking device. It lends a quirky, carnival-like formality to the open-plan kitchen.
ABOVE LEFT A work by sculptor Ruhan Janse van Vuuren is a surprise encounter on the patio.
ABOVE RIGHT A large part of the Groblers’ collection of period furniture was sourced over the years from Pieter Oosthuizen Antiques.



DESIGNER SWAG



« White Star trunk (Union Jack) R8 995 Weylandts



» Champagne Orchid (tint) TDR 2 Plascon



« Black chandelier (single-light) R299.99 Mr Price Home



» Caesar side chair (Satina Grey) R1 595 Weylandts



» Radial mirror R1 995 Coricraft



wall flanking the staircase – a velvety, organic elephant colour – offers an appropriately severe foundation upon which to display a grand Renaissance gallery of gilt-framed portraits and pastoral scenes.

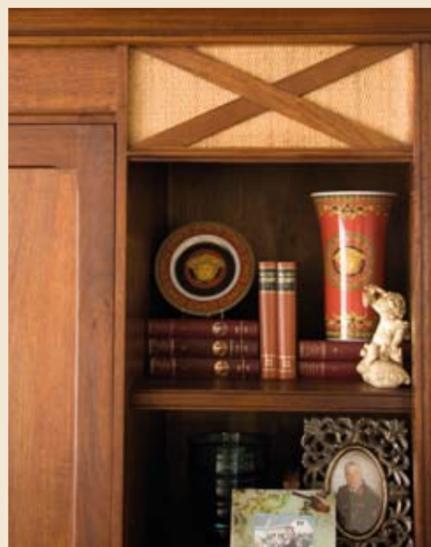
In the Grobler home, while you are undoubtedly present in an enclosed space, you are also acutely aware of the exterior environment that borders. This is as much prompted by what you can see as by what you can hear – from a neighbouring game reserve, the distant cries of hyenas and lions and, closer, attracted by the stream that straddles the property, a fracas among the birds.

‘It’s like you’re living outside,’ Anneliesa explains, ‘but with a roof over your head.’

For Anneliesa, who has previously won awards for her immaculately manicured gardens, the finishing of the exterior was as important as the interior detailing. Landscaper De Wet Louw helped her to create a garden that responds to the strong, clean lines of the architecture. Borders and beds contained within raised platforms feature a simple, evergreen selection of mondo grass, viburnums and star jasmine. In one corner the elevated area exhibits a contemplative composition of two bronze figures by sculptor Ruhan Janse van Vuuren, a powerful work that ironically questions the nature of contemporary lifestyle.

In their pocket of still, the Groblers find their answer every day. **TB**

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TOP Wallpapered top to bottom in a densely packed narrow stripe, one would imagine being overwhelmed by the ‘busyness’ effected but, in fact, the neutral colours lend a peaceful formality to the master bedroom.
 ABOVE, LEFT AND RIGHT If one could apply the word to a home, then the Groblers’ house could be described as photogenic – plentiful in beautiful formal compositions of line, pattern and shape.
 RIGHT The formal lines of the landscaped garden by De Wet Louw is a sensitive backdrop for the engaging, contemplative bronze figures in the work Equus-Act I Scene III by Ruhan Janse van Vuuren.



Trend report BUSTED

YOU only have to view the ‘sculptures, figures and statues’ page on Christie’s website to see how popular and collectible antique busts are. I find them in their appeal to human form and identity, the most alluring of classical artefacts. They have become signifiers for intangible sentiments such as nostalgia and a longing for times gone by. It’s both ironic and fitting that these representations should now mark the zeitgeist, since they were originally intended to be commemorations to the people whose likeness they bear.

Respected antique furniture purveyor Pieter Oosthuizen tells me that he has sold thousands of busts over the years, many of them exquisite della Robbia imports from Italy. According to Pieter it’s the timelessness of these objects that enables them to complement with such effortlessness both contemporary and classical interiors.

Pieter Oosthuizen Antiques & Interiors
 012-346-1746, poi.co.za

‘There is such beauty in Man, God’s greatest creation so it’s understandable that the human face and form has through the ages proved the most popular subject in all genres of art’
PIETER OOSTHUIZEN

