



HOUSE OF THE MONTH
WINELANDS HOME

THIS PAGE Eva and Göran Frick's Somerset West home is the result of a comprehensive renovation of what was a 70s suburban box. The gables were specially crafted, and the doors and windows replaced with old, solid wood. OPPOSITE The hallway blackboard gives a peek into the pair's busy social life.



southern right

A Swedish couple calls a gracious Dutch-gabled house in Somerset West home

Text **Kim Chaloner** Styling **Retha Erichsen** Photographs **Micky Hoyle**



To ground this place in authenticity, old, wide, solid wooden planks were used for the floors: 'We didn't want them butt-joined; they had to have gaps,' says renovator Evi Elsner. The freestanding cabinet was designed and made by Home Concept (021-851-1208). The hanging light is a slightly modified piece from Weylandts (weylandts.co.za). OPPOSITE, TOP Elements such as the deep-buttoned ottoman add to the heritage feel. BOTTOM Eva Frick's simple, classic personal aesthetic is right at home in this soothing space. The white slipcovered sofa was custom-made by Wunders (wunders.co.za).

Cape winters might be wet and windy, but they're positively mild when compared with the long icy spells that Europeans endure. It's not surprising that many choose to have a second home in South Africa, such as Swedish pair Eva and Göran Frick, who spend several months of the year at their elegantly gabled dwelling in the Cape.

For most of their married life, the couple's full-time home has been a modern, clean-lined structure of glass, steel and high design in the coastal enclave of Helsingborg, a juncture of medieval fortresses and modern commercial edifices at the southwestern tip of Sweden. There, Göran, a renowned gynaecologist, and Eva, a midwife, spent 26 years working together as caregivers and pioneering a clinic for pregnant women. Until, three years ago, as a testament to their adventurous spirits, they hatched a plan to avoid another bitterly cold winter.

But the couple never imagined their plan would involve regular travelling to the southernmost tip of Africa to spend long periods in a new-found cocoon in countryside idyll Somerset West. Much like their European pad, the lines of sight here extend as far as the eye can see – all the way to Cape Point when the weather is fine, and to Hangklip when it is not. But unlike their Swedish base, this home is a harmonious symphony of textures and natural materials, with a subtle undercurrent of European restraint. It's almost incomprehensible, though, that just three years ago this gracious home was a stock-standard, flat-roofed, face-bricked box that could never give the feeling of being truly sheltered.

It was on their first tour to these shores that the Fricks serendipitously accompanied some Swedish friends to a meeting with their renovation project managers, Evi and Jochem Elsner. The Elsners are the home-redesign visionaries responsible for radically eviscerating this structure and creating a polished yet unpretentious jewel. Of paramount importance to them was an authentic sensibility. 'What we didn't want was a simple replica,' states Evi emphatically. (She herself had coveted a Cape Dutch home after having seen one faux-Tuscan villa too many.) Having decided to toss mere mimicry out of the window, she painstakingly began researching nuances of the historic style, and searched for a talented artisan to sculpt the facade's gentle curves. Jochem pored over plans to obliterate the dark, squirrely interior and lift the ceiling and roof to achieve space and tranquillity.

The Fricks were enthralled by the Elsners' exciting overhaul of the house, and something was stirred within them. Back in Europe, they realised they'd formed an emotional attachment to the place. On receiving photographs of the finished (and fully furnished) house, they immediately booked flights to Cape Town to see it for themselves. After a whirlwind visit, 'we went back to Sweden, thought about it for three days and emailed them, yes!' says Eva.

'This is our real home,' they agree. 'We love the calm atmosphere ... we could stay here our whole lives. We wouldn't change it for anything.' Most mornings they hike in the Helderberg Nature Reserve, or out-drive their friends (young and old, South African and Scandi) on the fairways surrounding the house. If it weren't for their internationally dispersed family (their three adult sons, and young grandchildren, are based in Hong Kong, New York and Sweden), these 'swallows' would surely nest for good in this place called home. □

Evi and Jochem Elsner, Home Concept, www.home-concept.co

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LEFT In the en-suite bathroom, as in every room, vintage decor details – from taps to wooden-framed mirrors – create a sense of history.
RIGHT Adorning a wall in the master suite are plans of the manor house at Groot Constantia. Wooden accents and antique linen are contrasted with light, contemporary touches.



EVA AND GÖRAN'S HOME TRUTHS

What we love about our neighbourhood is that it's so laid-back and we no longer have to live at speed. Sweden is far more formal (Göran). **When we first walked through the door of our home** we just had this feeling... (Eva). We were sold in the very first minute (Göran). **The best things in life** are simple, natural things (Eva). **We love wine** – Stark-Condé and Overgaaauw are favourites (Göran). **Our top spots for a memorable meal** are Panama Jacks in Cape Town's harbour for crayfish, oysters and fresh line fish, and 96 Winery Road for the combination of red-meat dishes and its rustic, country feel (Eva). **Our entertaining style** is very informal. We love Mediterranean-style fish, salads, fresh vegetables, and good wines, of course... (Eva). **An ideal Sunday** would be spent shopping in Cape Town, wine-tasting at Waterford (it reminds us of Italy), playing golf, meeting people, reading up on African history, and listening to soul and jazz. **My favourite Somerset West spot** for window-shopping is Gister (see *HL's* May 2010 issue). **Our dream destination** is Kwandwe Private Game Reserve's Ecce Lodge in the Eastern Cape near Grahamstown. **I'd like to work for** a charity in South Africa (Eva).

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THIS PAGE The heart of this home is the farmhouse kitchen. The cabinetry was done by Easylife Kitchens Somerset West (021-851-2850). The floors were treated with an Earthcote concrete stain (earthcote.co.za). **OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** The seedpod votive holder made from a palm tree joins a variety of leaves, weaves and driftwood to immerse you in nature, even when indoors; the gardens are bursting with lavender, white roses and rosemary; entertaining alfresco is a favourite pastime, especially when family members, like son Jakob, 24, visit from abroad.

