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Nieuwehuys

The Karoo house that Brian built

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Thanks to the 50m² inner courtyard, the 180m² house appears much larger. Belgotex Duraturf provides greenery in an otherwise dry space while the formal engineer-designed fountain adds a 'cool touch' and a red, powder-coated laser cut metal tree with copper leaves by Lasertech brings a splash of colour to the courtyard.

2012

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The tale of a Karoo house

Nostalgia wrapped in a modern mantle provides the backdrop for the ecofriendly, wheelchair-ready Nieuwehuyz.

By Beatrice Moore-Nöthnagel • Styling: Misi Overturf • Photographs: Francois Oberholster

I'm most proud of the gables at the entrance; they're subtle, unique and striking. – Brian

Energy efficiency

It cost about R150 000 to install a solar power system to power the fridge, TV, fans and anything using less than 3kW. As soon as the load is higher, electrical power kicks in automatically. While the dishwasher, stove and washing machine are electric, Brian has since discovered that his washing machine can also operate on solar power as a toploader gets its hot water straight from the solar geyser, compared to a front loader which heats its own water. The solar power system stores energy for three days, accounting for rainy or cloudy conditions – which you don't often experience in the Karoo. Brian says that apart from a solar power system, there are plenty of ways in which you can save on electricity consumption:

- A solar geyser alone can save you between 25 and 40% in electricity.
- LED lamps and stripights save 80 to 90% more energy than ordinary light bulbs.
- Choose appliances with the highest energy-efficient grading (AA+ and higher), like the stylish black fridge, dishwasher and stove in this kitchen.

What makes for a Karoo-style home?

Because of the region's dry climate, pitched roofs aren't necessary and most homes have a flat roof with a slight incline at the back. Initially, 'brakdakke' made waterproof with clay were used but durable, waterproof zinc sheets which became popular in the 1860s soon took over. Later, many houses included a verandah – a structure loaned from the colonial British-Indian style that offered protection from the harsh sun. Even today, towns such as Hanover, Aberdeen and Colesberg still boast plenty of Karoo-style homes associated with traditional rural Afrikaner culture.



Window dressing

Double glazing would have proven too heavy for the sash windows so typical of Karoo homes, so durable single-glazed aluminium frames and aluminium shutters were chosen. 'Anyone can control the climate within a house by dressing the windows in the right medium and by opening and closing them as the sun moves,' says Brian. Thanks to the cavity walls, the windowsills are quite deep and four different coverings are used on most of the windows:

- Roller blinds block out the sun as a first defence
 - Linen curtains soften the light – and satisfy Brian's mum when she comes to visit!
 - Adjustable Venetian blinds let in the required amount of light
 - Curtains with blackout lining provide relief.
- Exterior shutters can also be closed against the sun. At night, everyone sleeps under mosquito nets with the windows wide open to encourage ventilation.

Boasting a solar geyser and solar power, the house is highly energy-efficient with an electricity account of less than R200 per month! In time, the white bougainvillea will grow over the tanks that store water for the fountain and little garden.



Waterwise considerations

With an annual rainfall as low as 200mm, storing and saving rainwater is a must, so Brian has installed three 1000-litre tanks to retain water for the hardy succulents in the indigenous garden at the front of the house.

The water feature in the inner courtyard provides an attractive focal point and cools the air, thanks to a high level of evaporation, and the durable artificial Duraturf grass from Belgotex Floorcoverings requires no watering!

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