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# SIT BACK ...and relax

Whether combined with a kitchen, dining or braai room, a comfortable living area will turn any home into a cosy retreat – perfect for quality time with friends and family.

## 1 It all happens here

This space in Silvia Miles's Natal Midlands home boasts a fully integrated kitchen and living area where the different zones flow seamlessly from one to the other, forming a practical and functional whole – from the counter unit behind the couch to the island under the mezzanine level where you'll always find someone chopping veggies or catching up on emails.

"The kitchen is our living area!" Silvia, the owner of Milestone Kitchens, explains. "It's got couches, a bookshelf, a spot for the dogs to sleep in, a corner in which to work on the computer and a great music system. It's where everybody does everything, except sleep."

The space is a sizable 80m<sup>2</sup> and consists of a dining area, cooking area, sitting area and study area, but Silvia doesn't like to label them as such. "It's just one big room and those are the different zones." >>

Wooden stumps and floor lamp from Weylandts; weaved hanging lights and Ash Fabrics upholstery (outdoor) on couch from Nôm de Plume Studio

### Must-have!

We love this black crochet rug that Silvia bought from Flordecor at Decorex last year!

### It's in the detail

The oversized butcher's block is Silvia's favourite item in the kitchen; it's on castors and can be swivelled to face the couch.

*Cosy and relaxed*

When it comes to décor, Silvia doesn't feel the need to create a typical French, Tuscan or Cape Dutch look: "We live in Africa and it's beautiful in its own right."

A black and green colour scheme works perfectly in this setting. "Green has always been my favourite colour. On the farm, we're surrounded by beautiful big trees, grass and rolling hills," she explains.

"Black creates depth and represents the shadows and the valleys; it disappears so it's unobtrusive. But it wouldn't work in a house that doesn't have a lot of windows and light."

Silvia brings the outdoors in with driftwood she has collected over the years used as décor as well as dried twigs in cases, aloes and leaves in glass jars, and stones displayed as focal points. "I use tree stumps as coffee tables and grass mats on the floor to carry the theme through; I also love the rocks on the wall next to the bookshelf (see right) which were collected on the farm." All of this is tastefully anchored by an engineered oak floor.

"The living area works for our family because it's restful and it's a good place to have a chat with friends over a cup of coffee or a few drinks," says Silvia. "The room is cosy and relaxed and offers plenty of seating options. And there's always a delicious aroma emanating from the kitchen!" >>

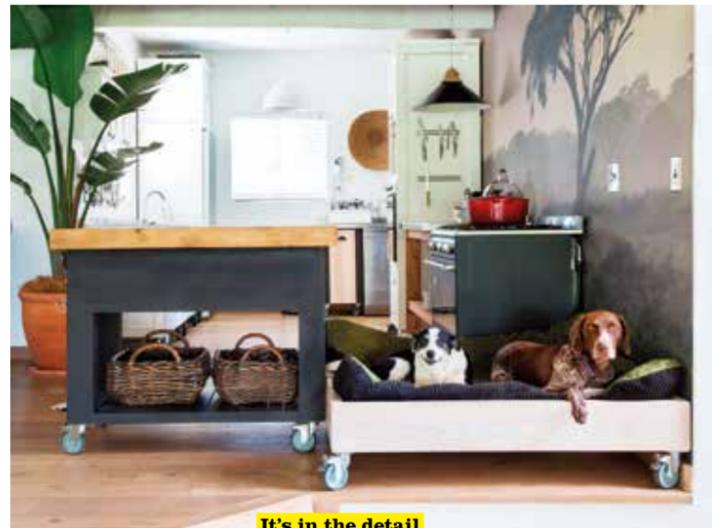


How cute is this bookshelf? Not only does it have plenty of space for all your books, but it also has space for Fido! The comfy dog bed is built into the unit.



**It's in the detail**

The striking wallpaper made up by Smart Art reflects the hundreds of beautiful acacia trees on the farm.



**It's in the detail**

This dog bed on castors keeps the family's pooches off the furniture – the dogs love them and they fit right in with the décor.

I'm not a winter person; I almost feel depressed when there's no sun, so the light in this space makes me happy! – Shelley Hills

## 2 A room with a view

With its magnificent view over the ocean, a sunny living room was the best way for Shelley Hills to make the most of her Port Elizabeth home. "When I purchased the house it was being used as an architect's office space – so, essentially, it was a blank canvas," she says. "It made perfect sense to maximise on the natural light and beautiful vistas by making this area the most focal and functional part of our home."

The open-plan space consists of a kitchen, dining area, undercover deck, study and lounge. "We spend most of our time in the dining area, chatting to friends, playing games or soaking up the sun with a good read. It's definitely the most popular spot in our home," says Shelley.

Because of all the natural light, Shelley didn't have to rely on colour to 'lift' the space. "I decided to keep the palette neutral with décor in various shades of grey to create a seamless flow and so as not to detract from the view. The aim was to keep it simple, stylish and yet still homely."

Shelley isn't a fan of natural or stained wood, so all the wooden frames and stacked doors were painted white to keep the living area light and airy. The floors were originally made up of various types of wood, so painting them white not only saved on replacement costs, but also further brightened up the area.

"I love the space because it's conducive to closeness with family and friends," explains Shelley. "There is always a sense of togetherness, even if my son Cameron is doing homework in the study while I'm watching TV in the lounge." >>

### Bright idea!

To ensure that her fabrics didn't fade in harsh sunlight, Shelley added a one-way tinted film to the glass doors instead of blocking the view with curtains or blinds.



### Tips 'n tricks

Creating the ultimate living area isn't about bashing out walls, advises interior designer Brigitte Hills. Plan well beforehand and bear the following in mind:

- Think carefully about the functionality of the space and carefully consider where the furniture will be placed and how you will move from one area to another.
- If your sofa divides the lounge from the rest of the space, position a server behind it to make it feel a bit more 'anchored'.
- The biggest mistake people make when they have a large living room is pushing all the furniture up against the walls; rather create pockets of seating within the space.
- The kitchen has become the hub of most homes, so getting the design right in relation to the rest of the space is crucial.
- Once you've figured out where the lounge, kitchen and dining areas will be located and you've decided on the position of the bigger furniture pieces, you can start creating 'rooms' for each area.
- A large rug is great for anchoring the lounge and dining area as it helps to define the space.

Shelley loves the stacked doors and windows which not only let in lots of light, but also frame the gorgeous ocean view by day and twinkling cityscape at night.

### It's in the detail

The kitchen cabinets were custom made and the old rusty pendant lights and vintage metal signs add character. Shelley stuck a "house rules" vinyl sticker above the stove and put a piece of glass over it to create a splashback.

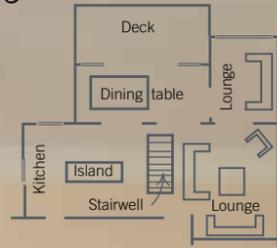
The sideboard under the mirror in the dining room holds a special place in Shelley's heart – it's an old record-player cabinet that she painted, distressed and jazzed up with new doorknobs.



Interior design by Brigitte Hills Interiors

Shelley inherited the dining chairs from her grandmother and had them painted and reupholstered. She discovered the dining table in a second-hand shop and simply painted the bottom white and kept the wooden top natural to add warmth to this area.

The layout



The study nook is in the same space as the dining area – the lounge is open plan to the right. After receiving a few inspirational wire words as a gift, Shelley decided to purchase more from local crafters and create a wall full of them (see right).



Silverware and glass make a classic combination – it's sophisticated and adds a bit of bling to a neutral palette. Here, it works especially well on the painted wood and against the raw brick wall. >>



# 3 Everyone is welcome

When Lizanne and Johannes van Waart built their Stellenbosch home back in 2003, they had a very clear vision of what they wanted: a spacious living room and stoep were to form the heart of the home – just like the old “voorkamers” in the Karoo homes they’d grown up in. “I was raised with the concept of an open home where people can just pop in for a visit, especially on the weekend,” explains Lizanne.

Today, the entertainment and braai area forms part of the stoep with large folding doors opening up onto an inviting swimming pool. Most importantly, everyone is always welcome.

“The stoep is where we get together in the evenings and in the mornings,” says Lizanne. “We enjoy a quick breakfast before work or a glass of wine in the evenings. On weekends, my parents, our children – Henri (30) and Christiaan (20) – and their friends all come to visit.

“In fact, we braai every Sunday evening – it’s a tradition we started many years ago when my kids had to go to boarding school. It was dreadful, so we

decided to cheer everyone up with a braai before they had to be on their way. With both of us being Karoo people, large family meals at the table are important.”

When it comes to décor, curtains were a definite no-no for Lizanne who wanted to let in as much natural light as possible. She describes her style as a combination of old and new with plenty of bright colours, Indian influences and a touch of French flair. “My friends always say they find my house interesting. I see it as a version of myself,” says Lizanne. “I like fabric and colour and I’m very sentimental about things that tell a story. I guess that because I’m a psychologist, people and their stories are close to my heart – and the same goes for my décor.”

## 3 hot trends

“The latest living room trends are chic, inspiring and, most importantly, liveable and practical – and they’re comparatively easy to achieve,” says Claire Gibson from La-Z-Boy. She explains:

**1 Closer to nature** Natural materials such as leather, wood, stone and metals are more popular than ever, as are earthy tones such as shades of brown, green, grey and off-white. Accents in brighter natural hues such as sky-blue, grass-green and coral-red are perfect for a splash of colour.

**2 Marvellous metallics** Brushed, satin or matte finishes will add texture while aged copper, brass, gold or stainless steel are great for accents. The trick is to include striking metallic accents without being heavy-handed.

**3 Less is more** Quality beats quantity! It’s all about including a few select statement pieces that stand out because they’re so well-crafted or have sentimental value.



## It's in the detail

The lights were bought from Private Collections a few years ago. Since Lizanne grew up in the Karoo, she wanted a typical reed ceiling. This one comes all the way from Bredasdorp.

Lizanne loves comfortable furniture. For her, an afternoon nap on a large sofa in the winter sun is a must.



## It's in the detail

Lizanne loves Turkish influences. The Turkish-style Travertine tiles are from Natural Stone Warehouse in Paarden Island. The rug is from Arabesque in Stellenbosch.



STOCKISTS Arabesque 021 424 1234  
 Brigitte Hills Interiors 083 652 9895, brigittehills.co.za  
 Flordecor 072 199 3795  
 La-Z-Boy 021 951 7150, la-z-boy.co.za  
 Milestone Kitchens 076 949 5745, milestonekitchens.co.za  
 Natural Stone Warehouse 021 506 1300, naturalstonewarehouse.com  
 Nom de Plume Studio 033 342 4158  
 Private Collections 021 421 0298, privatecollections.co.za  
 Smart Art 021 447 0872, smartart.co.za  
 Weylandts 0860 103 400, weylandts.co.za