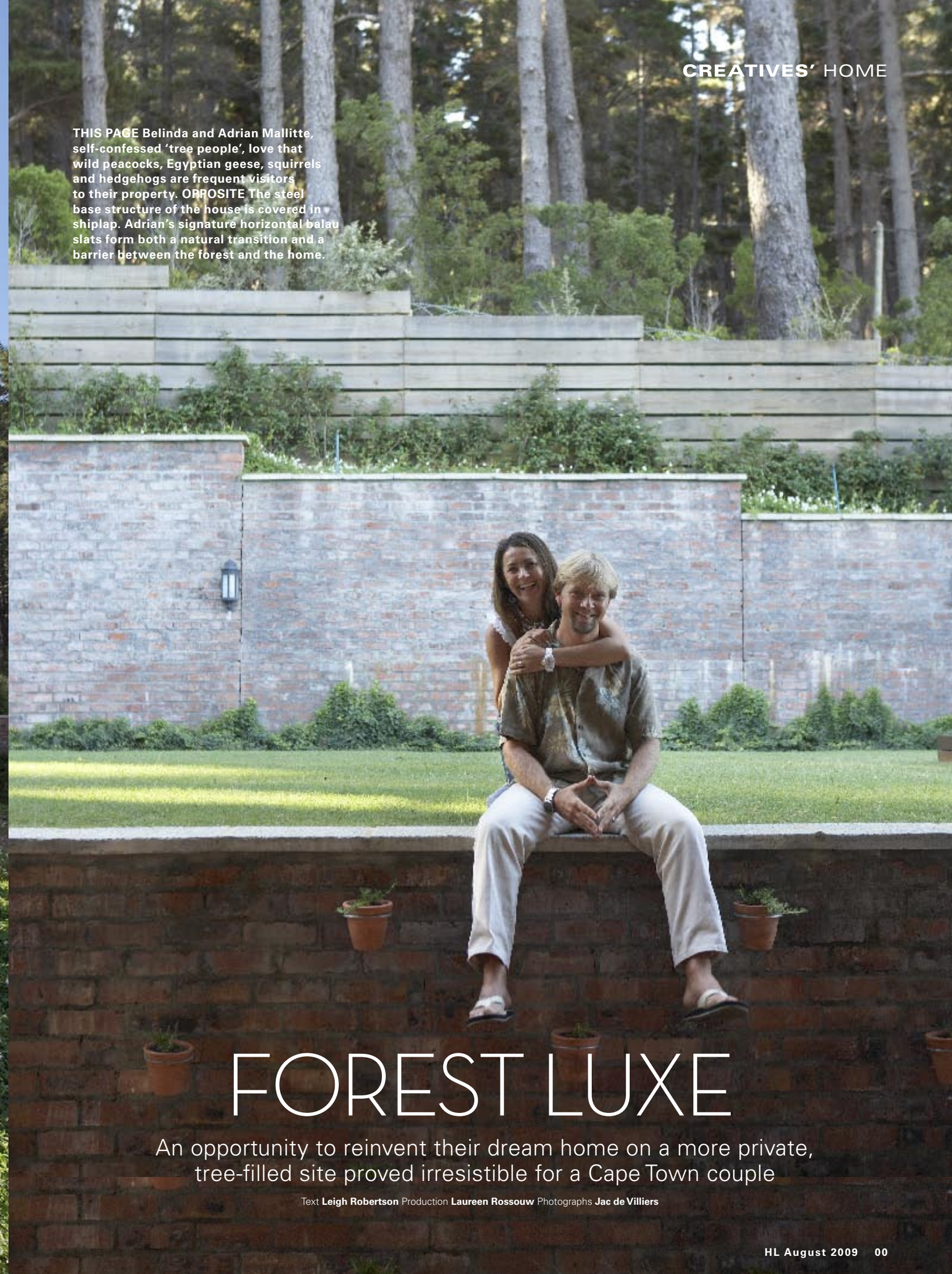




THIS PAGE Belinda and Adrian Mallitte, self-confessed 'tree people', love that wild peacocks, Egyptian geese, squirrels and hedgehogs are frequent visitors to their property. **OPPOSITE** The steel base structure of the house is covered in shiplap. Adrian's signature horizontal balau slats form both a natural transition and a barrier between the forest and the home.



FOREST LUXE

An opportunity to reinvent their dream home on a more private, tree-filled site proved irresistible for a Cape Town couple

Text **Leigh Robertson** Production **Laureen Rossouw** Photographs **Jac de Villiers**



While strolling through a courtyard at the Palazzo Venier dei Leoni on the Grand Canal in Venice – home to the Peggy Guggenheim Collection and formerly the residence of the legendary art patron herself – Adrian Mallitte, unsurprisingly, had a light bulb moment.

The Cape Town architect and his interior designer wife, Belinda, had only recently settled in properly at their dream home on a sylvan stretch of mountainside in Hout Bay, having escaped city life for a gentler existence closer to nature. ‘We didn’t think we could have it better than we already did, but Adrian decided right there that what was missing was a beautiful courtyard,’ Belinda reminisces.

Through their business, Salt and Pepper Design, Adrian and Belinda take on individual projects and occasionally collaborate. The house, on the upper reaches of a private residential estate, is a prime example. A combination of Adrian’s contemporary design sensibility – all double-volume steel and glass in his signature slatted-balau cladding – and Belinda’s glamorous aesthetic and taste for tactile luxury, it was a corner of paradise from which they had no intention of uprooting themselves. Until their Italian holiday, that is.

Soon after their return to South Africa, the plot above the house serendipitously became available to purchase. It was the highest remaining land on the fringe of the neighbouring forest and offered the tree-loving couple an appealing sense of seclusion. They were compelled, says Belinda, to give it serious thought.

For Adrian, being right across the road meant the year-long building process was easier to control. Their reinvented home is structurally similar ‘but with a lot more steel,’ he says. ‘It’s always fun to do your own home as you get to experiment as much as you like.’

He’s excited by the expectation created as visitors ascend the grand steps to the porch, almost Georgian in style, to what appears to be the front door. You enter, not into the house itself, but a vast double-volume courtyard protected from the elements (bar the open rectangle above the water feature) by a corrugated-iron roof. Adrian had been daydreaming not only of Venetian palaces but also of Balinese homes, traditionally built around an inner courtyard. Theirs functions as both an inside and outside space, perfect for entertaining friends, with voluminous curtains let loose to billow in the breeze in the warmer months, creating a soft frame for the serene wooded vista beyond.

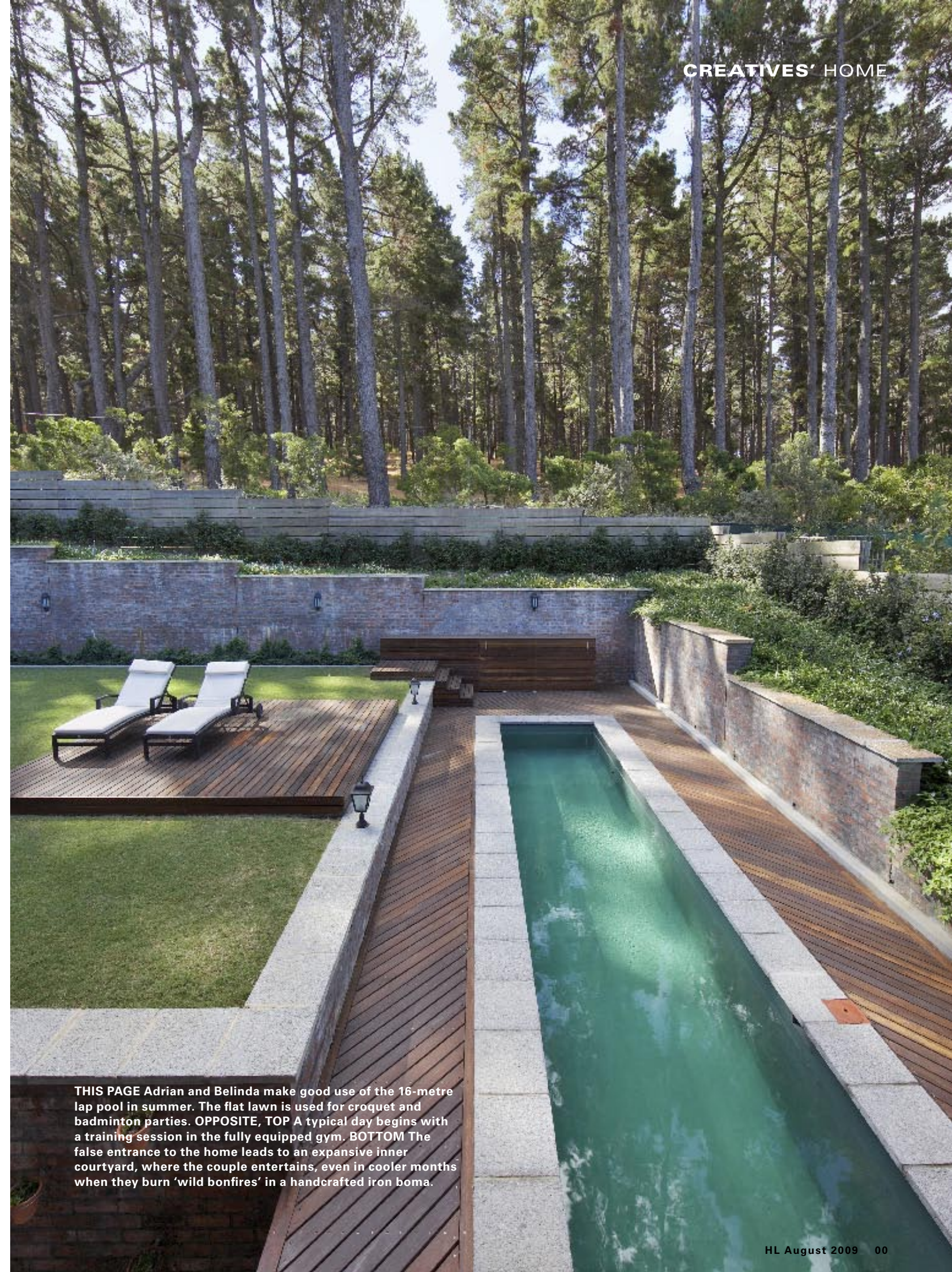
The real entrance is through massive glass doors that slide away and reveal the living areas and open-plan kitchen. On the opposite side of the courtyard is a state-of-the-art gym leading to the slim, 16-metre lap pool, which is overhung by the main bedroom and balcony.

‘Architecturally, it’s more introverted than the other house, with everything facing the forest or opening onto the courtyard,’ explains Adrian. ‘It’s designed so that we are always connected even if we’re in separate rooms.’ Belinda, who likes to spend ‘an hour soaking in the bath every night’ (the luxe en-suite bathroom is one of her favourite spots in the house), enjoys that the house is open while feeling distinctly private.

The interior style is in keeping with her penchant for ‘grandeur and all things French’ – from the Parisian-themed guest loo downstairs to the lounge with its plush velvet chaise and couch, floor-to-ceiling dupion silk drapes and assortment of chandeliers. This opulence – a play on old colonial and contemporary styling – is given a sexy, cinematic edge by night when an electric-blue skylight is flicked on.

In the master bedroom, the sumptuous sleeping area is separated from the bathroom by a dressing room, where a display of Belinda’s show-stopper heels is the focal point. Yet indoors she’s happiest being barefoot. For the couple, whose adored Maltese poodle, Lulu Bell, has the run of the house, comfort and practicality are paramount. ‘This is our home, after all,’ says Belinda. □

Salt and Pepper Design, 021-418-5391, saltandpepper.co.za



THIS PAGE Adrian and Belinda make good use of the 16-metre lap pool in summer. The flat lawn is used for croquet and badminton parties. **OPPOSITE, TOP** A typical day begins with a training session in the fully equipped gym. **BOTTOM** The false entrance to the home leads to an expansive inner courtyard, where the couple entertains, even in cooler months when they burn ‘wild bonfires’ in a handcrafted iron boma.

THIS PAGE The kitchen-cum-dining room is conducive to relaxed entertaining. The pendant lights are from Province Lighting (021-461-4661, provincelighting.com). On the African rosewood table is 'Strandloper' by Daan Samuels from Africa Nova (021-425-5123, africanova.co.za). OPPOSITE A skylight adds drama to the living area. The sofa is covered in velvet from Hertex Fabrics (011-262-4108, 012-346-4331, 021-461-7420, 031-312-0632, 041-373-2887, hertex.co.za), and the crystal chandelier and silver-leafed mirror are both from Delos (021-422-0334).





CREATIVES' HOME

THIS PAGE A chandelier from Delos ups the luxe factor in the couple's bathroom. The French wallpaper is from Hertex Fabrics. OPPOSITE, TOP Belinda's favourite pieces in the main bedroom are the deep-buttoned headboard in baroque velvet from The Silk and Cotton Co. (011-448-2578, 021434-4225, 031-303-8203, silkco.co.za) and the mannequin displaying her wedding dress. BOTTOM The ottoman in the dressing room is from ?????????.



ADRIAN & BELINDA'S HOME TRUTHS

Our favourite season is summer; we like winter for two weeks, then start finding reasons why we should move to Miami. **We're inspired by** seeing people enjoying spaces and items we've had a hand in designing. **We love that our home** works well in summer and in winter, when the double-lined curtains keep it warm and insulated. **Our entertaining style** is relaxed and casual. We'll help you find the fridge, but then you're on your own. **Our dream dinner guests** are our friends. **We're famous for** our competitive games of croquet and badminton on the lawn. **Our best cuisine** is Indian or a braai, but in winter it's warm comfort food. **My favourite room is** the lounge (Adrian). Our bedroom – I wake to birdsong every morning (Belinda). **The decorative details I treasure most** are the stained-glass windows Adrian's mum made for our front door (Belinda). **My design style** is an eclectic mix, but I try to marry old style elements and language with a contemporary feel (Adrian). **My definition of glamour** is a beautiful piece of furniture covered in exquisite fabric and the texture of wallpaper. It's also the way I feel when I put on a pair of Italian shoes or a well-made garment (Belinda). **I adore fashion.** My favourite fashion house is Dior (Belinda). **My pet design hate** is a complete implementation of a style from the past without being able to adapt it to the current environment and context (Adrian). **I'm lusting after** the new Maserati or a Jag (Belinda).