

Retreat on the Crocodile River

Location: Magaliesberg Mountains

Owner: Johann van Heerden

Architect: owner

Interior design: owner

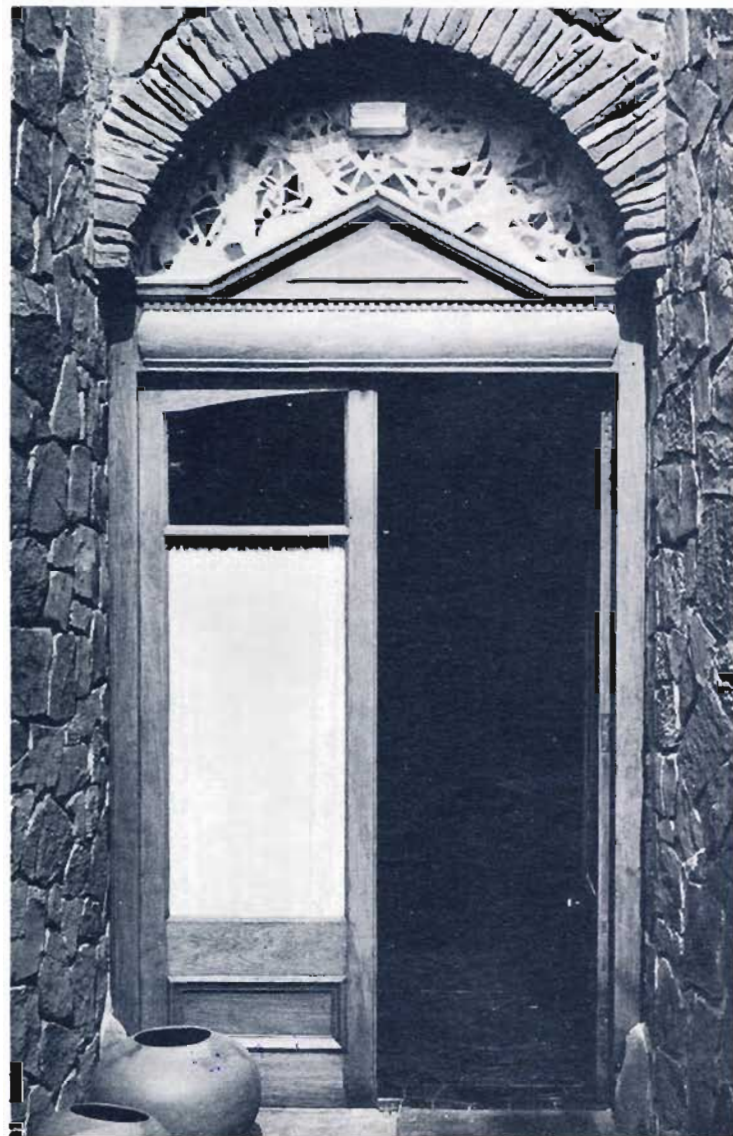
Sculptor Johann van Heerden and his artistic French wife Jaqueline, live in the Magaliesberg mountains in a house they designed and built themselves. Poised on a rocky hillside

above the Crocodile River, this house is almost as indigenous as the spectacular landscape which surrounds it.

The Van Heerden's twenty-five morgen of mountainous veldt yielded a wealth of rocks of every conceivable building size — these were used exclusively in the construction of the house. Even river sand is available on

site and the owners have rigged up a pulley system to transport sand from the river below. The walls of the house are built of rock and are double-skin with a concrete interlining core. Although certain interior walls are plastered, many are as rustic as the exterior — all have incredible strength.

The owners have furnished their







house in a casual country fashion with a fair amount of Afrikaner and Cape Dutch furniture and a few contemporary Scandinavian pieces. Textures and tones abound throughout the interior — the floors are of sealed quarry tiles on which rugs are scattered. Fabrics are rustic and colourful with simple geometric patterns — some were handwoven by Jaqueline van Heerden.

Johann van Heerden had toyed with ideas of building his own house for many years. His preferences were for rock and rusticity and on returning from Europe, where he had been working, he finally adapted one of his many plans to fit the Crocodile River site. After problematic experiences with the varying levels, building was started in 1963.

The Van Heerdens are still building. Next on the list is a loggia and change room arrangement next to the pool. This area commands a spectacular view across the Crocodile River of unspoiled indigenous mountain terrain rich in aloes and protea and still inhabited by baboon.

This house is so secluded and tranquil as to be almost akin to an eyrie set high up, some forty feet above the river. As a place of work and stimulus to the artistic owners, it is near to perfection. As a self-sufficient domestic habitat, it is equally so.