

# ELLE DECORATION COUNTRY

Volume 12

THE WORLD'S  
MOST BEAUTIFUL  
HOMES IN  
THE COUNTRY



modern design / rural retreats / coastal havens / country classics  
*PLUS 51 essential buys for your home*



# PAINTED

# BY LIGHT

*With sunlight streaming in from all sides, the interior of this home in South Africa's winelands has the dreamy, luminous quality of a Dutch masterpiece*

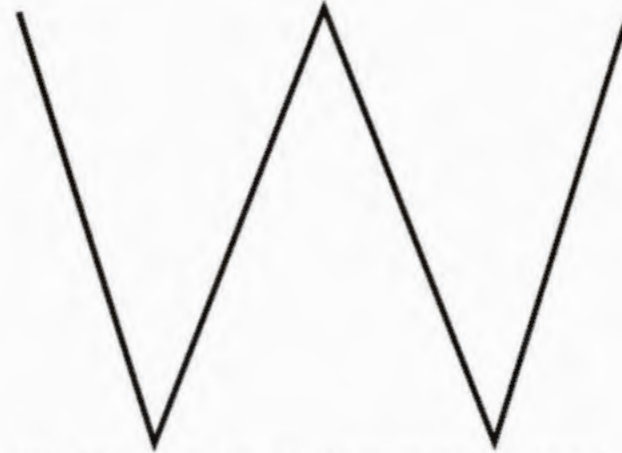


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With its thick, whitewashed walls, pitched reed-thatch roof, rounded gables and pleasing symmetry, Babylonstoren is one of the finest remaining examples of Cape Dutch-style architecture in South Africa's picturesque winelands. Originally built in 1777 – although the farm itself dates back to 1692 – the house is now part of a hotel owned by Karen Roos, former editor of *ELLE Decoration South Africa*, and her husband, Koos Bekker, chairman of multinational internet and media group Naspers. Dividing their time between properties in Cape Town and Somerset in the UK, this home, which sits within eight acres of gardens in the idyllic Franschhoek Valley, is where the couple head to escape busy city life.

'It was the quality of the light,' says Karen, when asked what first drew her to the traditional H-shaped building. 'The layout allows the sun in from all sides, which makes it feel like a Vermeer painting.' Another pull was that the manor house, although occupied for 240 years, had never been modernised, and some gentle restoration work was all that was needed to return it to its original splendour. Worn flagstones were lovingly polished to a high shine, and windows, beams and floorboards were reconditioned. In the sitting room, no fewer than 23 layers of paint were removed to reveal ochre walls edged with teal, cream and brown, which were carefully matched and then repainted. 'The palette downplays the heaviness of the dark built-in cabinets, which just melt into the original colours,' says Karen. Meanwhile, the kitchen is home to a huge refectory table, where the family often convene – apart from during the summer months, when meals are enjoyed in the vine-covered courtyard.

Despite the attention to original detail, this home has modern touches, too. There are the cream sofas by Philippe Starck for Driade, luxurious leather armchairs by Antonio Citterio for Flexform and a classic Artemide floor lamp that create a sophisticated contrast with their historic setting. 'We wanted to preserve the centuries of patina,' remarks Karen, 'it was a big challenge, but we wanted to turn the house into a space that works right now.' [babylonstoren.com](http://babylonstoren.com)















THE SOFTLY SUNLIT ROOMS HAVE THE  
ATMOSPHERIC FEEL OF A VERMEER PAINTING





SET WITHIN EIGHT ACRES OF GARDENS IN THE IDYLIC  
FRANSCHHOEK VALLEY, THIS HOME COMMANDS VIEWS  
OF THE MOUNTAINS AND SURROUNDING VINEYARDS

