

# The Glasshouse: An Architectural Poem!

In Johannesburg, South Africa, Nico Van Der Meulen Architects designed this spectacular 26,000 square foot home. They are the versifiers of enchantment, the makers of splendor in house designs, creators of fairy tale like habitats, spreading their pixie dust of mastermind over this mesmerizing Glasshouse planned to infuse charisma into the hearts of its viewers.

It is an open, light filled house where views of the backyard are seen from all rooms. The architects devised a massive complex of living spaces, arranged in a semi-circular pattern to envelope the garden. Immense concrete framework is arranged in a radial pattern, emanating from the center of the home. The framework complements outdoor living spaces, including the decks, patios, pools and fountains.



Extravagant touches abound throughout the home, including a twelve car underground garage, indoor pool, naturally ventilated atrium, art gallery and an elegant entry staircase hovering above an indoor pond.



These features are tied together with a rich, cohesive palette of rare stone and wood paired with extensive integrated lighting. To meet the owner's demand, this house was built with a modern, glamorous, open plan, light-filled with views from all rooms into the garden. The shape on the south side is a half circle, forming a horseshoe on the north side. Approaching the house from the gate, the driveway is elevated to allow glimpses through the house to the garden and raised water feature on the other side of the house.



The porte cochere is a suspended glass and stainless steel structure. With a view into the house and a stainless steel and glass staircase, drooped over a heated pond, (which in summer acts as a temperature stabilizer and in winter as a giant heater), with a circular, raised glass water feature in the background and framed by a beam two storey high.

To the right is a small sunken formal lounge and to the left a timber-clad lift tower. The dining room is raised a couple of steps above the family room. The window to the dining room is a six meters high curved glass enclosure, where each sheet of glass leans over further than the previous sheet with glass fins holding it in position.



The kitchen leads off the family room and dining room, with a pair of automatic, frameless sandblasted doors leading from the dining room to the kitchen. A breakfast area and playroom are adjacent to the kitchen, allowing the younger children to be supervised from the kitchen and family room, and allowing direct access to the bar and bar-beque area from the kitchen.

An atrium between the family room and the kitchen allows the family to ventilate and cool the house naturally, without compromising their security. A roller shutter door drops down automatically when the alarm is activated, cutting the top floor off from the ground floor. The walls to the family room and bar are clad with marble strips with glass inlays and LED strip lights.



You can jump from the main bedroom into the pool, swim to the gym, swim back and use the steel spiral staircase to go back to the main bedroom, or tip a tipsy friend into the pool from his barstool!

A basement under the house has parking for about twelve cars, with a view into the pool, and a top-lit art gallery which forms the passage between the garages and the lift.



The study is a glass box at the top of the staircase, with a view over the downstairs pools. A large play-room is situated next to it, with an intimate home theater and kitchenette, leading to a large balcony with a shaded porch. The main bedroom on the other side of the hall is reached via a gallery looking down into the dining room and out to the garden.

The main suite has a small lounge and built-in kitchenette, with a drop-down screen and projector built into the bulkhead.

The double volume glass enclosure over the pool can be opened from the balcony outside the children's bedrooms, allowing a cooling updraft over the pool.



A large balcony off the main bedroom is partially covered, granting respite from the summer sun, or allowing all fresco early morning coffee or late afternoon drinks, while a staircase to the roof allows views over the surrounding suburb and towards midland.

The main bathroom is a study in glass and transparency: the North and East walls are glass and slides open, even if privacy is required, the doors can be left open and the automatic blinds can be lowered, still allowing views and ventilation, but looking translucent from outside.



From another balcony the door overlooking the double volume in the family room can be opened, again resulting in a cooling chimney effect to the living areas. Overall this showcase house shouts to the eye and whispers to the heart ! ➡