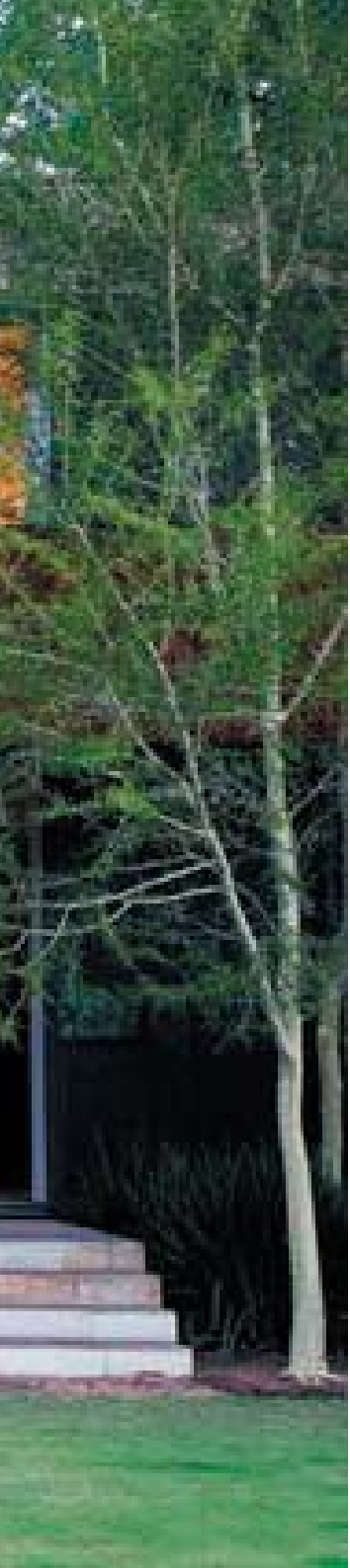


no.10 **valley road** long house
johannesburg, south africa





"We owe it to the fields that our houses will not be the inferiors of the virgin land they have replaced."

Alain de Botton, *The Architecture of Happiness*



No.10 Valley Road Long House, designed by architect, Pierre Swanepoel of studioMAS, is a contemporary take on a highveld home. It is a tool to experiment with new typologies of Architecture for a specific South African climate, where the word 'climate' encompasses physical, social and economic aspects. The project is viewed as an "estate" first and then as a building in the landscape. It is opposed to "theming" and animation. Rather, it is formed on the basic requirements of its inhabitants and environment.

It responds to the rich, contextual layers in which it is located - the Westcliff heritage in the heart of urban Johannesburg. The architecture is reflective of living in comfortable and flexible manner, while still reaching high levels of refined minimalism. As with most studioMAS projects, this house takes concerns from daily life such as safety, comfort and privacy, and adapts them to a contemporary urban home. The house is set back from the street. A raised garden area, places it at a higher level than the street; so it does not feel too enclosed, while still allowing for a high sense of safety.

Much of the poetry of the architecture is experienced inside. The house responds to the moods of its inhabitants as it opens and shuts and allows itself to be both shut off from the world, or very social and open. As one space flows into the next, the eye travels even further, as windows and openings merge indoors and out continuously. The interior of the house is open and fluid resulting in open spaces that are quite straight forward to understand and which are continually flooded with light, fresh air and the sounds of nature.

Another endearing quality of the architecture, is its relationship with the landscape. The internal courtyard is almost completely covered by creepers, creating a magnificent green enclosure, while the main garden is accessed from the ground living spaces, along a series of steps that are placed between two rows of Acacia trees. The expansive lawn is inviting and a definite call for the wonderful Johannesburg climate to be enjoyed, outdoors.

[Previous Page](#)

View of the north facade opening up into the garden

Left

View of the main staircase within a double volume space and lit by a dramatic strip roof light.

Referred to as the economic powerhouse of Southern Africa and possibly the entire continent, Johannesburg is less than 150 years old. Evidence of its mining heritage is visible throughout the city and people still come to Joburg, as it is also called, to find their fortune. Cosmopolitan, edgy and vibrant, Joburg is a city that constantly reinvents itself.

Westcliff, is one of the oldest and most central suburbs in Joburg. Just minutes away from both major institutions such as universities, hospitals, parks, shopping centres and the CBD, it boasts easy access to the M1, which increases its accessibility to areas further field.

Being one of the first suburbs proclaimed in Johannesburg, it forms part of the sought after established suburbs of the city. Its tree lined streets offer a reminder of their heritage, of a time less than 100 years ago, when this valley was filled with a tree plantation containing over a million trees.

1 LOCALITY

26°10'3.87"S 28° 1'51.30"E

Far Right

Aerial view of Westcliff and the Johannesburg skyline while the position of the House is indicated by a red asterisk.





The area around Westcliff has a rich civic history of individuals and groups. One such individual, Hermann Eckstein, real estate broker and businessman, was responsible for building a number of spectacular houses on the ridge including, Hohenheim. He died during a visit to Europe before he could complete his plan to fill the broad valleys below Westcliff ridge with trees. After his death, many of his friends and associates encouraged the planting of this dream, forming what was called the “Sachsenwald” (Saxony Forest). More than a million eucalyptus trees were planted on 1 396 acres of the Sachsenwald before the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer war. The plantation included the present Johannesburg Zoological gardens, the War Museum, as well as 200 acres of the Hermann Eckstein Park or Zoo Lake. During 1925/26 most of the trees were cut down to establish Forest Town, Parkwood and Saxonwold.

2 HERITAGE

Right

A view Westward toward Westcliff with Northwolds in the foreground. The densely tree planted area is now where the M1 runs.

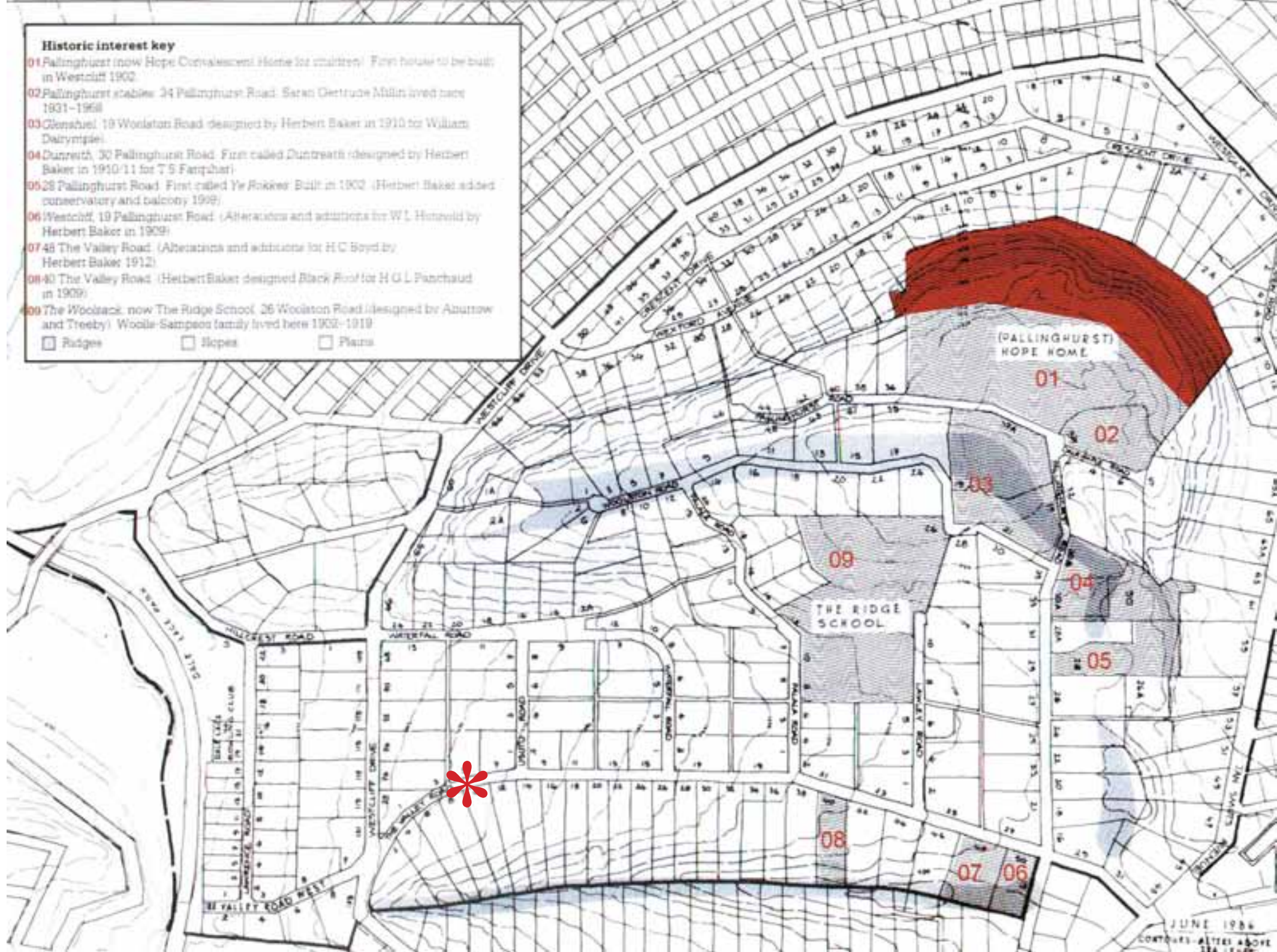
Far right

An map of Westcliff showing the location of some heritage buildings in the suburb. The red area high lights the new Westcliff Estate which has won numerous awards. No.10 valley Road is indicated by a red asterisk.



Historic interest key

- 01 Pallinghurst (now Hope Convalescent Home for children) First house to be built in Westcliff 1902
 - 02 Pallinghurst stables 34 Pallinghurst Road. Sarah Gertrude Mills lived here 1931-1968
 - 03 Glenahel 19 Woolston Road designed by Herbert Baker in 1910 for William Dalrymple
 - 04 Dunreth 30 Pallinghurst Road. First called Dunreath (designed by Herbert Baker in 1910/11 for T S Farquhar)
 - 05 28 Pallinghurst Road. First called Ye Rokker Built in 1902 (Herbert Baker added conservatory and balcony 1909)
 - 06 Westcliff 19 Pallinghurst Road. (Alterations and additions for W.L. Hornold by Herbert Baker in 1909)
 - 07 48 The Valley Road. (Alterations and additions for H.C. Boyd by Herbert Baker 1912)
 - 08 40 The Valley Road (Herbert Baker designed Black Roof for H.G.L. Panchaud in 1909)
 - 09 The Woolstack, now The Ridge School 26 Woolston Road (designed by Abuttow and Treeby) Woolle-Sampson family lived here 1902-1919
- ▣ Ridges ▣ Slopes ▣ Plains





2.1 Historical background to the Residents of Westcliff

Where Westcliff derives its name from the natural character of the suburb, most of its streets are named after its early residents. The proclamation by Lord Milner that all townships be incorporated in the Johannesburg Municipality brought final approval for the suburb in December 1903.

The area has a rich civic history of individuals and groups. One such individual, Hermann Eckstein, was considered bold and extravagant and was responsible for a number of spectacular houses on the ridge including Hohenheim. He died during a visit to Europe, before he could complete his plan to fill the broad valleys below Westcliff ridge, with trees. After his death, many of his friends and associates encouraged his planting legacy of what was then called the "Sachsenwald" (Saxony Forest). It was so successful that at the end of 1897 the Board could report that the more than a million eucalyptus trees were planted on 1 396 acres of the Sachsenwald before the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer war. The plantation included the present Johannesburg Zoological gardens, War Museum, as well as 200 acres of the Hermann Eckstein Park. During 1925/26 most of the trees were cut down to establish Forest Town, Parkwood and Saxonwold.



2.2 Local architectural character

Most of the early houses are still visible and well loved by the people of Westcliff, Parktown, Saxonwold, and Parkview. Herbert Baker's "The Stone House", Northwards, Richard Schumacher's Pallinghurst and Sir William and Lady Dalrymple's house, Glenshiel, built in 1910, were amongst the first houses on the northern slopes sharing a view of the Sachsenwald and the Magalies mountains to the north.

Adapted from Flo Bird, Parktown-Westcliff Heritage

Although the fashionable architectural styles of the period influenced Westcliff's architectural character, it was the steep rocky slopes that defined it. The local architectural identity in the early part of the twentieth century, is characterised by the use of local building materials and available labour. Stone harvested from the area is the dominant building material and has contributed significantly to the present day character of the neighbourhood.

Renowned architect, Sir Herbert Baker, left a distinct mark on the present day architectural character of Westcliff. A few of Johannesburg's wealthy businessmen, gave Baker carte blanche to design their homes. These houses, built of local stone are archetypal of the English colonial picturesque tradition.

As with many other established suburbs, Westcliff was shaped over time expressing the layers in its architecture. It has received its quota of modern and contemporary architecture, proving the growth of the suburb continues. Number 9 Palala Road designed by Douglas Cowin, won the 1934 Rand Daily Mail Home Competition and was clearly influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright's designs. More recent contributions include Number 20 Pallinghurst Road, designed by Bannie Britz and Michael Scholes and for which they were awarded the Transvaal Institute of Architect's prize in 1983 as well as Westcliff Estate designed by studioMAS, which has received an award of excellence, among others.

Left

A view of the internal courtyard. The walls are covered in ivy, creating a green haven that is peaceful and tranquil.

3 ARCHITECTURAL WRITE UP AND DRAWINGS

No.10 Valley Road Long House

Westcliff houses and estates are among some of the most sought after in Johannesburg. If their historical and architectural character is not enough, then their natural context - the slopes, ridges and trees - surely is. Partly because of the large stands in Westcliff, these estates usually comprise of large landscaped gardens, with the main house set back from the tree-lined streets. The spaciousness of the stands, allows for privacy between neighbours to be maintained as well as an opportunity to create striking architecture. This is the context within which this house is placed, and one which has been carefully respected.

The site on which No.10 Valley Road Long House sits, consists of 2 houses. Both have been designed together, in such a way that they harmoniously maximise privacy between them, while still creating homely and comfortable spaces, that are characteristic to the suburb.

The back courtyard house is designed as a live work unit, it is made to open onto a central, very private courtyard. The front long house, on the other hand, has been based on more traditional design principles characteristic of the highveld.

Both houses share a driveway, and access into the main houses is from a common parking court, which functions almost like a semi-private courtyard. While this is an unusual practice, it allows for more of the valuable land that makes up this site, to be used for living spaces rather than wasteful service spaces. This common access area also allows for both neighbours to meet each other in an unplanned manner, before they enter their very private houses.

No.10 Valley Road Long House plan is based on various perpendicular axes which intersect to emphasise views and create private spaces. The main axis is aligned to the entrance foyer, from which a view through a large windows frames the internal courtyard. From here, the central living spaces are access, with the living rooms flowing into the dining room area and spilling out into a large outdoor entertainment patio. This

Right

A view from the dining room, across the internal courtyard toward the main entrance hall.



patio also serves as the boundary wall along the driveway and frames the garden space, from which maximum benefit of Johannesburg's temperate climate can be met.

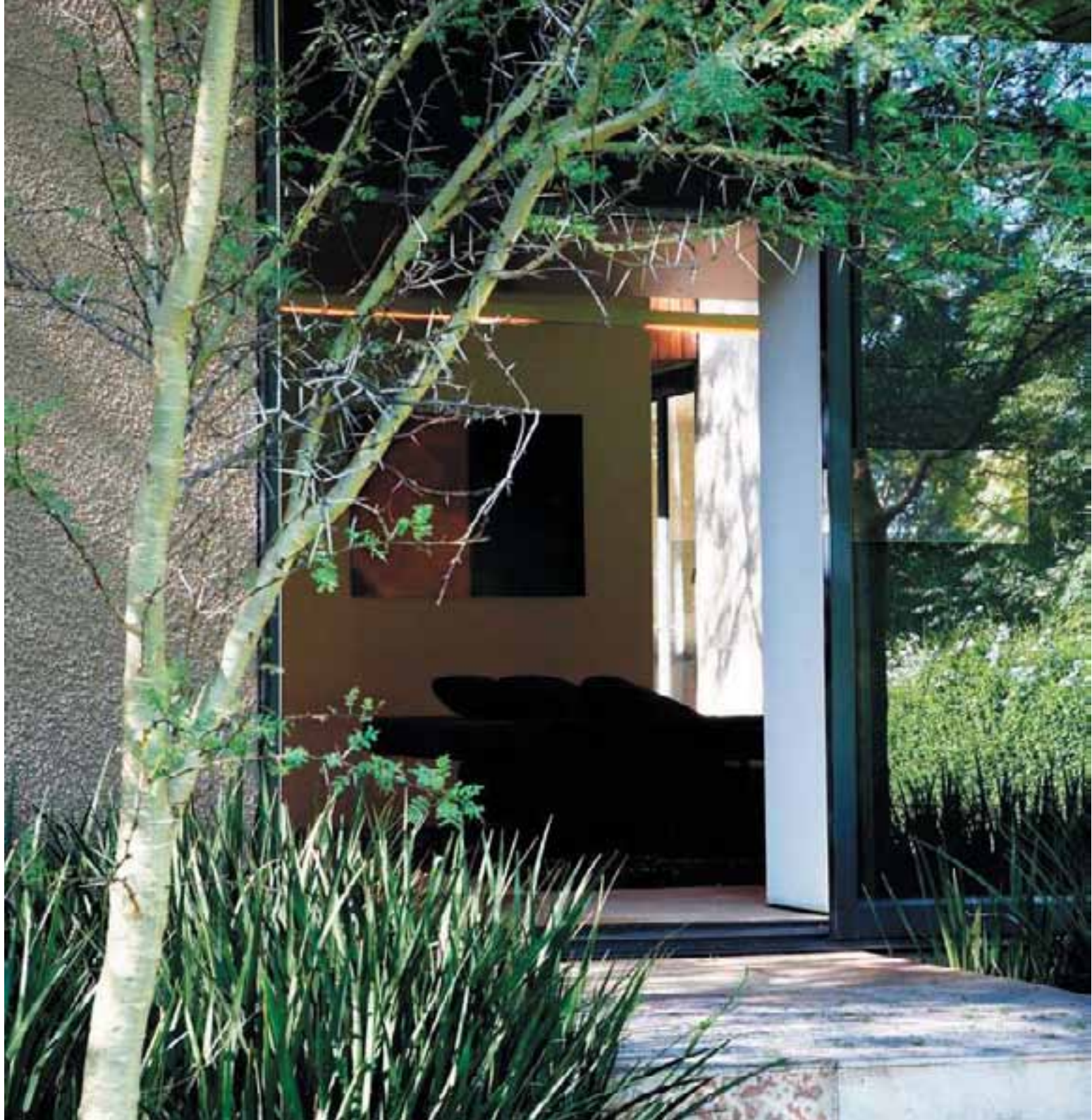
As far as possible, the traditional internal circulation corridor has been absorbed into the usable space, maximising the robustness of the plans and creating an economy of space that is not always characteristic to circulation space. The main staircase is used as a sculptural design feature in the living room area, allowing for views across it and thereby increasing the sense of ample space that characterises this home.

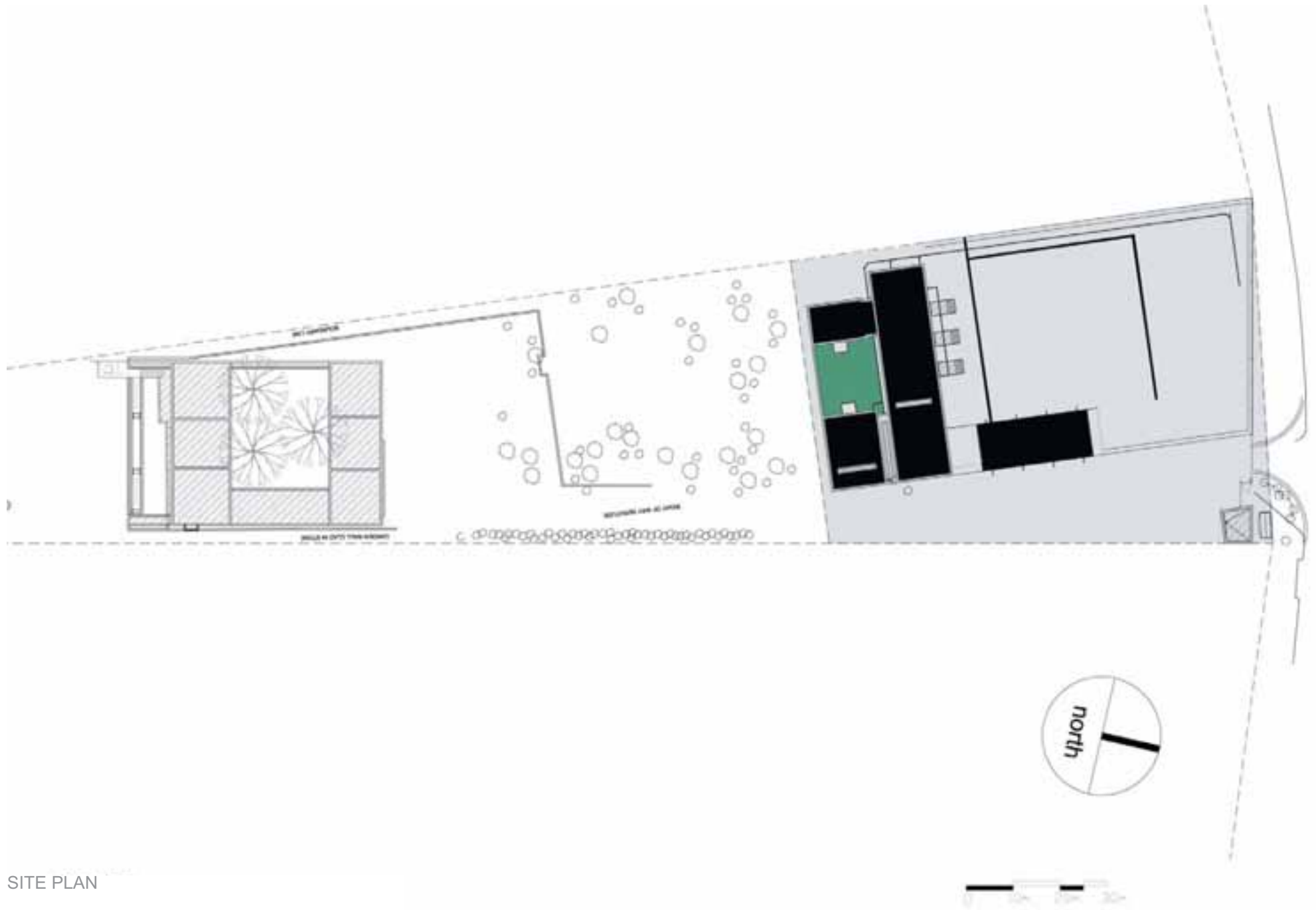
The more communal gathering place in the house, have the benefit of spilling out into the large lawned area outside that mediates between the main house and the street. This garden is raised high above the street so that security is improved and views are maximised. The communal spaces also have the benefit of a serene and private internal courtyard. The result of this internal courtyard not only creates a very private and secure open space within the house, but also floods the house with an abundance of natural light.

From these more communal spaces, one moves into more private, quiet and contemplative spaces. Five bedrooms are located on the first floor, two of which open out into the private courtyard with their own balconies. These rooms benefit from the security afforded them by the courtyard, and therein one can easily sleep with the doors open to the refreshing night air, making the most of the wonderful African climate.

No.10 Valley Road Long House is an architectural work that plays on the characteristics of a traditional highveld house, but takes them elegantly into the 21st century. It's charm lies in the way space is experienced: while in one room, many views into other parts of the house and garden are available, increasing the already prevailing impression of spaciousness. It is designed to be comfortable, while still promoting a slick, minimalist interior. It is designed to create a safe, internal core; the courtyard, around which the day-to-day activities of a, home unfold.

Right
From the garden, with a view into the main living area.





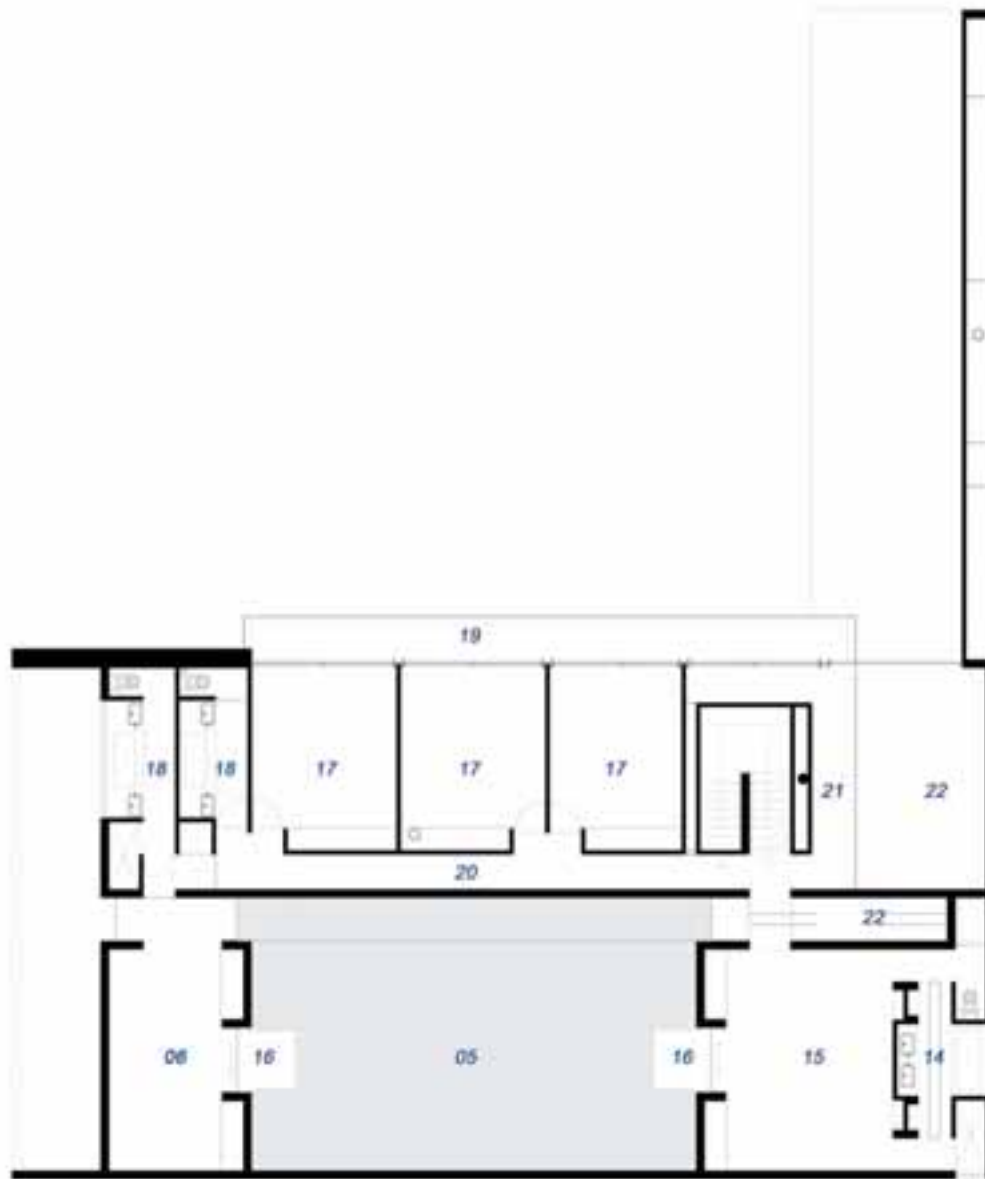
SITE PLAN



- 01 Entrance Hall
- 02 Garage
- 03 Staff Room
- 04 Bathroom
- 05 Courtyard
- 06 Family Room
- 07 Guest W.C.
- 08 Laundry
- 09 Scullery
- 10 Kitchen
- 11 Dining Room
- 12 Lounge
- 13 Outdoor Entertainment Patio
- 14 Main Bathroom
- 15 Man Room
- 16 Balcony
- 17 Bedroom
- 18 Bathroom
- 19 Balcony
- 20 Passage
- 21 Library Balcony
- 22 Double Volume Space

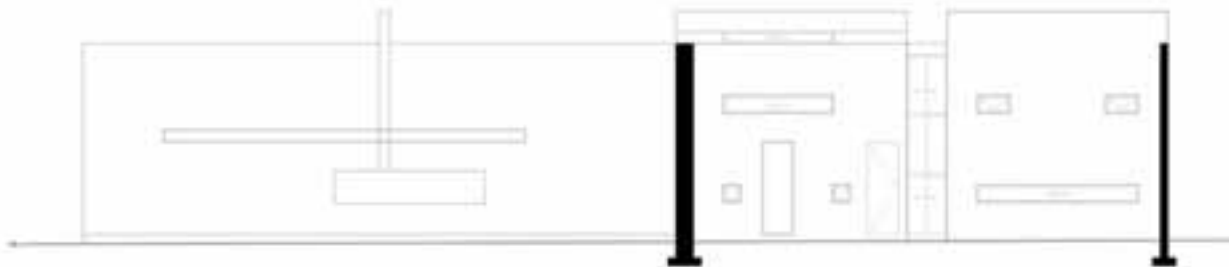
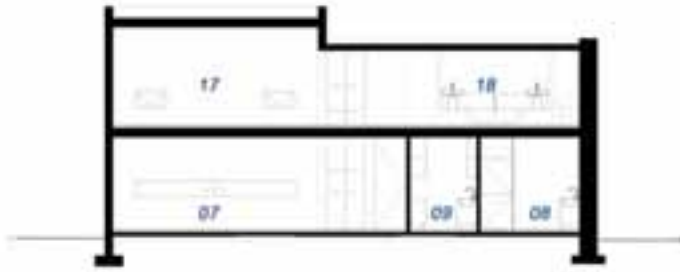


GROUND FLOOR PLAN



- 01 Entrance Hall
- 02 Garage
- 03 Staff Room
- 04 Bathroom
- 05 Courtyard
- 06 Family Room
- 07 Guest W.C.
- 08 Laundry
- 09 Study
- 10 Kitchen
- 11 Dining Room
- 12 Lounge
- 13 Outdoor Entertainment Patio
- 14 Main Bathroom
- 15 Main Room
- 16 Balcony
- 17 Bedroom
- 18 Bathroom
- 19 Balcony
- 20 Passage
- 21 Library Balcony
- 22 Double Volume Space

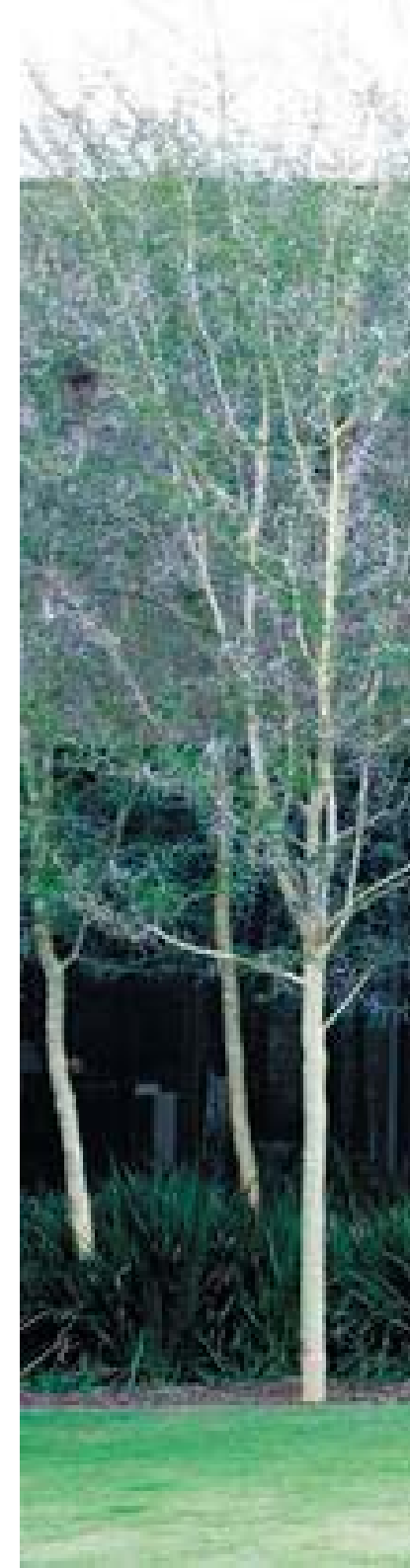
FIRST FLOOR PLAN



- 01 Entrance Hall
- 02 Garage
- 03 Staff Room
- 04 Bathroom
- 05 Courtyard
- 06 Family Room
- 07 Guest W.C.
- 08 Laundry
- 09 Scullery
- 10 Kitchen
- 11 Dining Room
- 12 Lounge
- 13 Outdoor Entertainment
- 14 Main Bathroom
- 15 Main Room
- 16 Balustrade
- 17 Bedroom
- 18 Bathroom
- 19 Balcony
- 20 Passage
- 21 Library Balcony
- 22 Double Volume Space

4 PHOTOGRAPHIC WALKTHROUGH

Right
The northern, street facing facade, with it's large lawn, open ground floor spilling over into the garden







Left
A view of the Acacia trees

Right
A view of one of the ground floor rooms leading into the garden with a series of steps, placed between two rows of acacias. The first floor bedrooms open up on a timber clad balcony.





Left
A view of the Garden edge and building Threshold.

Right
A view of the house from the main garden





Left
A view of the Garden edge and building Threshold.

Right
A view of the house from the main patio
entertainment area







Left

A view across the outdoor entertainment patio toward the main house.

Right

A view directly into the formal lounge from the garden

Following page Left

Two views from inside the lounge areas into the garden and outdoor entertainment patio.









Left
A view of the main staircase in the double volume living areas
Right
A view of the fireplace in the formal lounge with the stair detail in the background



Left

A view of the main lounge and living area, showing the doors opening up into the main garden.

Right

A view across the lounge into the private internal courtyard, with a view of the first floor projecting balcony and the ivy covered walls.

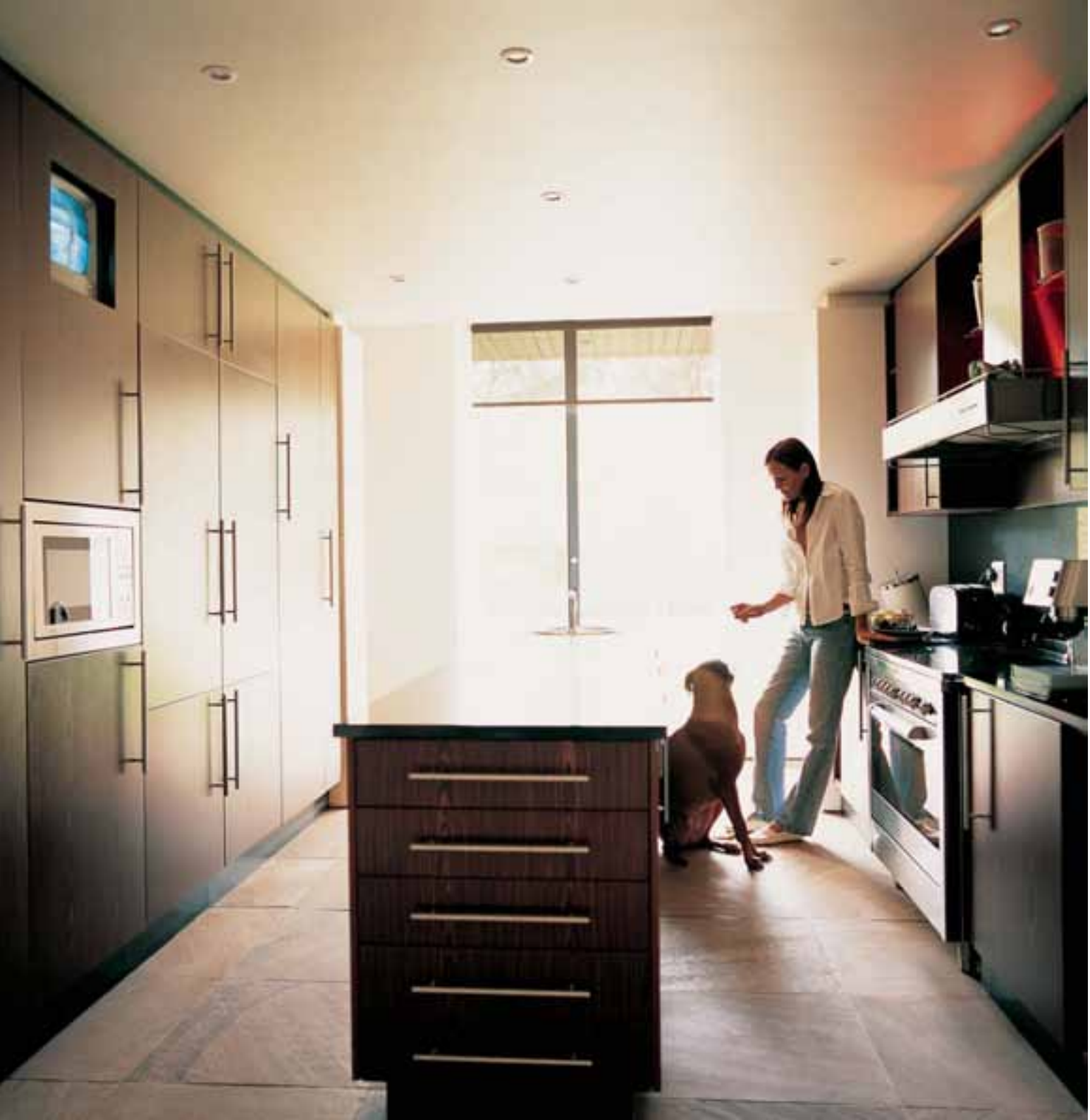
Following pages

More views of the main lounge, showing how inside and outside merge as well as how the internal spaces flow seamlessly into each other.









Left
The kitchen, with custom built fittings and which opens directly into the garden.

Right
A view of the kitchen from the garden, with steps leading into it between two rows of trees.





Left

A detail of the central island in the kitchen with a view into the dining room in the background.

Right

A view of the dining room



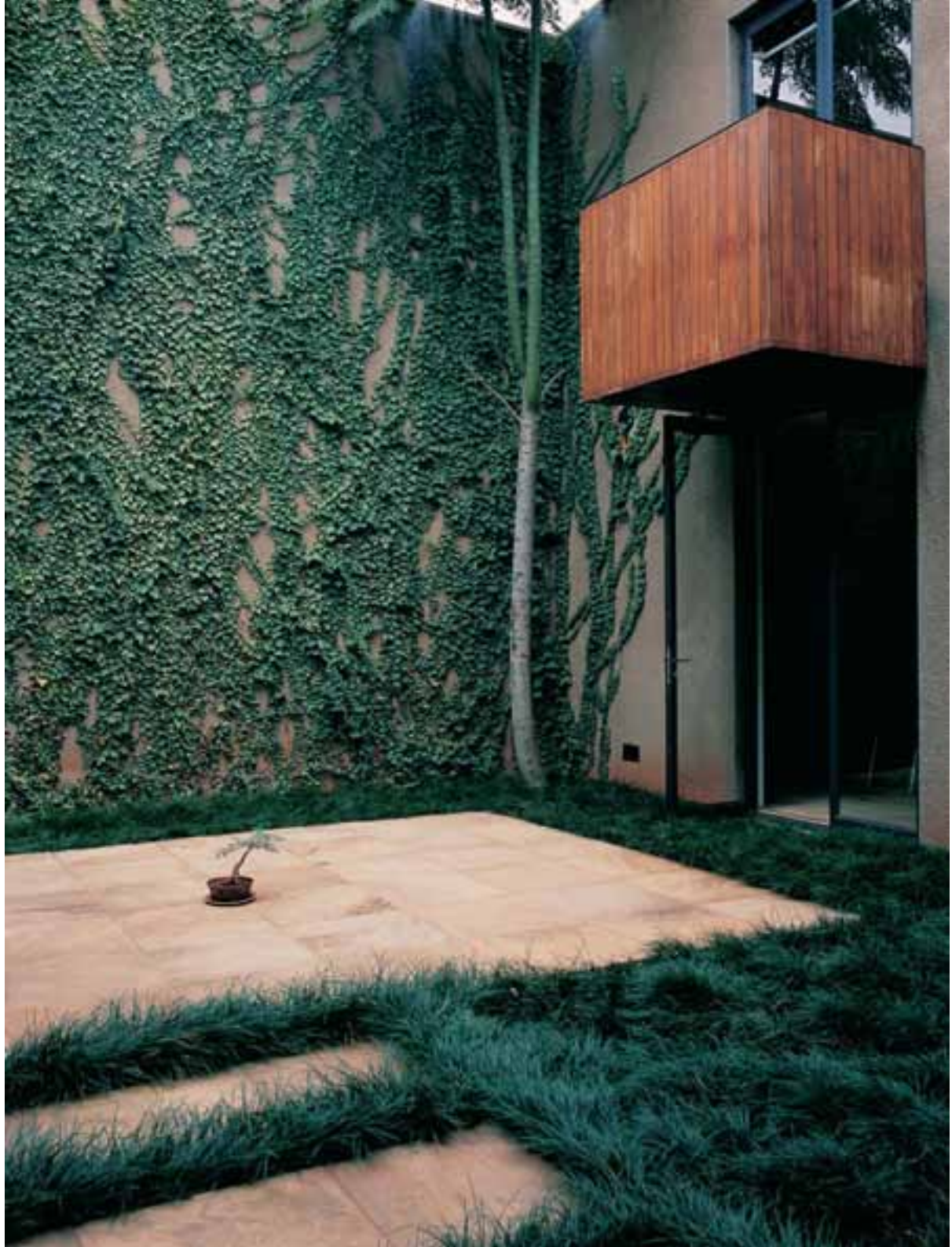


Left
From the dining room, there are view into the kitchen as well as the gardens beyond. The strip window floods the room with natural light.

Right
A view across the internal courtyard from the dining room, leading into the main entrance hall beyond.







Left & Right
Two views of the internal courtyard, with direct
access into the ground floor only.



Left
The view from the main staircase into the formal
entrance lounge and office area.

Right
A view into the main bedroom from the family
room across the internal courtyard.

Following pages
The main living room and en-suite bathroom









Left
The guest bathroom

Right
The guest bedroom







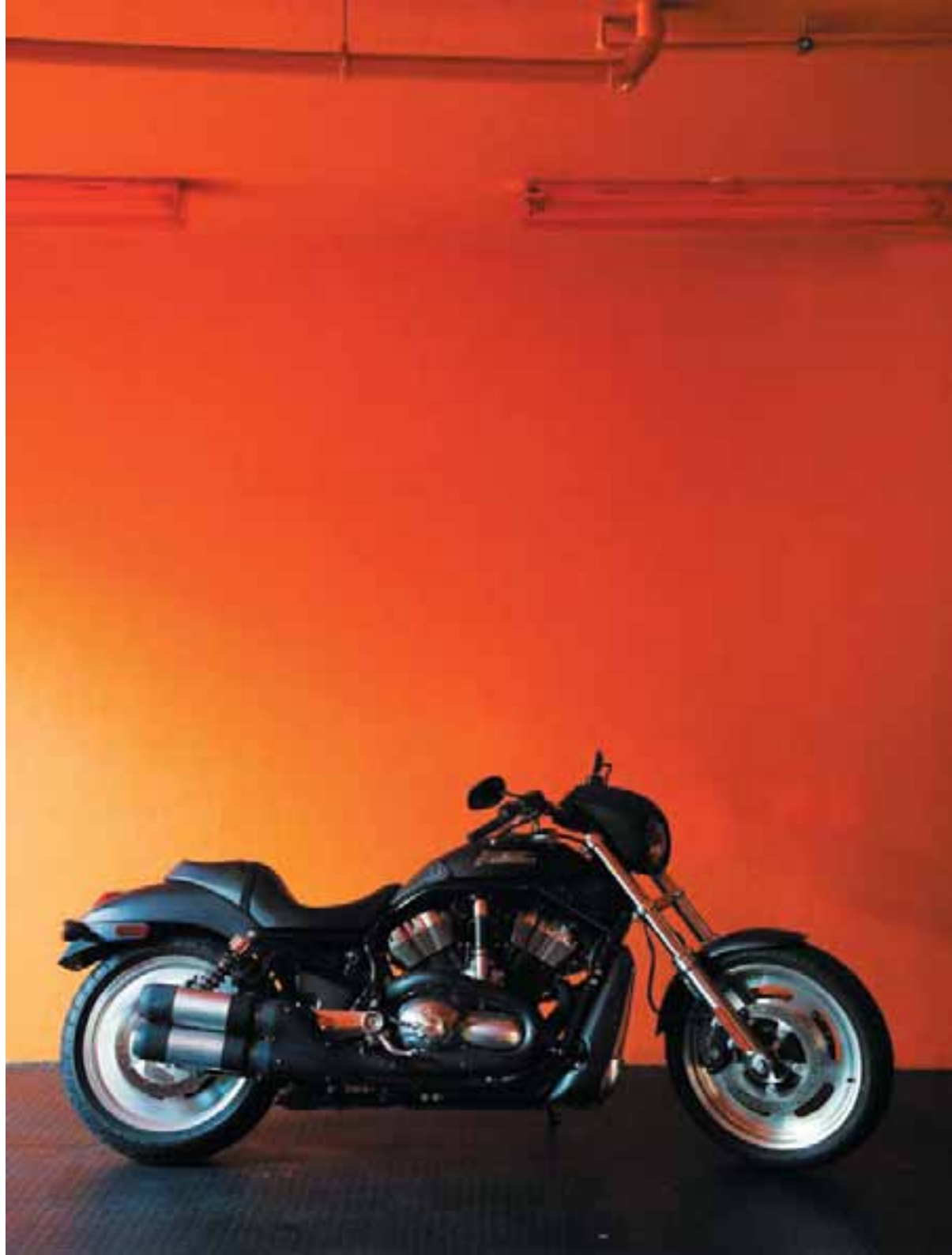
Left
A close up of the strip window ledge

Right
A view of the main entrance hall, which has views into the courtyard beyond. The access door into the garage is shown on the left, while the bridge over the double volume space leads into the main bedroom.



Left & Right
Two views of the stylish garage space

Following pages
A detail of the balcony in the internal courtyard,
softened by the ivy on the right.
A detail of the creeper on an external wall.



5 EXTRA INFORMATION/ FURTHER INVESTIGATION

5.1 Publications

Articles

TITLES?

STUDIOMAS WEBSITE

<http://studiomas.co.za/valley-road-house.php>

5.2 Photographic credits

NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER?

5.3 Select Bibliography

Chipkin C M, 1993, Johannesburg Style, David Philip, Cape Town.

Felstar, 1967, Johannesbug – City of Gold, Industrial & Commercial Publications (Pty) Ltd, Johannesburg

Macphail, E, M. 1986, The Storey of Westcliff, Palala Press, Johannesburg.

Telford A A, 1969, Johannesburg, Gothic Printing Co. Ltd., Cape Town.

Van Rensburg C, 1986, Johannesburg One Hundred Years, Chris van Rensburg Publications (Pty) Ltd., Johannesburg

Wentzel, J. 1975. A view from the Ridge, Johannesburg Retrospect No. 6. David Philip. Cape Town





no.10 valley road long house
2009

compiled by
E Peres

of
studioMAS architects + urban designers

for Alessandro + Karen Balestri