

# Brought back to life

In the wake of her transformation, this 80-year-old home is a grand dame once more.

By Maryke Roberts • Photographs: Francois Oberholster



Last year, Clifford and Maryke Roberts – both writers from the Strand – posted regularly on *Home's* website, updating readers on the progress of their latest renovation project. Now, a year since their first blog, their new home is finally finished – as are the countless hours of planning, knocking down and renovating. Here's their story...



'We lived in our previous home for 17 years and there our biggest renovation was the stoep ('From *afdak* to super stoep', *Home*, October 2009). When we began our search for another home in town where we could live with my dad, we were sceptical that we would ever find a lovely, old house with such character again,' Maryke explains.

'The third house the agent took us to see was the same one we'd once admired on our evening walks through the neighbourhood – and now we own it! Our offer was accepted on Valentine's Day.'

The two-bedroom house, built in 1933, had only had four owners and the wooden floors, frames and doors were in impeccable condition. The house is located right in front of an otherwise open double plot (a rarity in Strand), with the house and single garage situated in the shade of three oak trees ranging between 40 and 80 years old.

'Besides the fact that we had to build a cottage for my father-in-law, we also needed another garage and wanted to furnish an office on the property – and, of course, there had to be another large stoep!' says Clifford. The couple once again consulted with the architect who designed their 'super stoep' seven years ago. Armed with Maryke's four scrapbooks full of ideas gleaned from newspaper clippings, Marcus Smit began working on the design. But since the house is more than 60 years old, Clifford and Maryke also had to take into account the fact that the Western Cape Heritage Foundation

would have to approve their plans. In order to preserve the character of their home, it would be out of the question to break down its façade to build additional rooms.

'In our previous house we had limited light and space, so these became prerequisites in our new home. It was essential for cupboards, walls, tiles and bathrooms to be pure white to create as much light as possible, with interior finishings such as crystal handles and chandeliers to reflect it. We went for a minimalist look and only kept furniture pieces that complemented an open-plan lifestyle and made the best use of the space,' Maryke explains.

The biggest factor in the design – after style – was the cost. Many of the windows and interior doors are second-hand, and the couple decided to use corrugated iron sheets for new structures because the building cost is R1 000/m<sup>2</sup> cheaper than bricks. Their builder, Abel Vicente of VPM Building, took on the challenge – and the stoep, the cottage for Maryke's father and the second garage with the office above were built with corrugated iron sheets that were later painted white.

In keeping with the venerable heritage of the home, Clifford and Maryke decided to repeat certain signature elements in their renovation. They made up shower doors from steel window frames, as featured elsewhere in the house, and slasto, which was used for the original stoep floor, was repeated on the new verandah as well as for an outside shower.



### Living areas

The house had no dining room and the kitchen was dark, with Novilon covering up the old Oregon pine flooring. 'We decided to knock out the wall dividing the lounge and kitchen and added two steel-frame doors to the living area,' explains Maryke.

The small built-in verandah at the back of the house was converted into a scullery, and the old kitchen door was moved to the pantry where it opens up onto the garden. Plumbing and electrical points were moved and new ones installed where necessary.

While a red stove contrasts beautifully with the white metro tiles, cupboards and work surfaces, black pendant lights over the dining table complement the black table legs. >>



Before

## Bathrooms

The yellow and beige bath, shower, basin and toilet were removed from the old bathroom, the walls were covered in white tiles and checkerboard tiles in white and charcoal were laid on the floor. This now serves as a guest bathroom while the former patio has been converted into an en suite bathroom finished with a steel-frame door and white Victorian bath to give it a spacious feel.



## Bedrooms

The previous owners slept in the front room and used the second bedroom as a dining room. The former is bigger, but converting it into an en suite would have proved complicated. Now, what was the dining room serves as the main bedroom after a wall in the old patio was partially broken through. The cupboards extend to the ceiling, with white fabric in the inside panels of the doors to introduce a softer texture; a shoe storage unit in front of the window sports a comfy cushion where you can sit and read in the winter sunshine.

The cupboards extend all the way to the ceiling to save space.



## Costs

Home improvements  
R556 545  
New patio and interleading area  
200 000  
Garage and office  
331 000  
Cottage  
281 000  
**TOTAL**  
**R1 368 545**

## Tips

- Ask for advice from as many friends as possible before you begin designing.
- Determine exactly what doesn't work in your current house and avoid making the same mistakes in your new one. Take photos of your current house, because design faults are much more obvious to spot in photos than with the naked eye and this will enable you to plan better when designing your new home.
- Don't move in before the renovation is complete.
- Don't build according to fashion trends. Rather choose a timeless style – this will keep your house 'in vogue' longer and is beneficial when you want to sell one day.
- Budget for a third more than your builder's quote and add in a third extra to the estimated timeline of your project.



## Patio and garage

The patio features whitewashed, exposed wooden beams – there's no ceiling – creating a barn-like effect. The interior corrugated iron walls of the attached cottage and office have been clad to look like solid walls, complete with picture rails.

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