



**THIS PAGE** The main living area with reclaimed sandstone walls, putty-coloured screed floors, low furniture. On the ceiling are leather-thong fringed lights which designer Chris Brown and Jessica Getty refer to jocularly as the 'Balenciaga chandeliers' **OPPOSITE** Surrounding the infinity pool is a wide deck looking over the veld on which are day beds with khaki mattresses to loll on after a swim or in the evening breeze



TARA AND JESSICA GETTY'S  
COUNTRY HOUSE AT PHINDA  
HAMPIONS THEIR VERY MODERN,  
ECO ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

# down to earth

TEXT LIZ MORRIS PHOTOGRAPHS DOOK

With the warm Indian Ocean and the world heritage site of St Lucia wetlands on its flank, tucked in beneath Mozambique, alongside Swaziland, is a corner of Northern KwaZulu-Natal that is the not-so-well-beaten end of the South African safari circuit. Unlike the Sabi Sands and Kruger area to the north which has come to feel like Plett in the bush, the area around Phinda, and the Getty's farm, Zuka, retains its untamed frontier feeling. And, despite a major and unique pulling point – the fact that it offers both a bush and beach experience – it is not the big league's chosen investment or leisure territory. Yet.

Tara and Jessica Getty are the exception, and their thatch and Free State-sandstone country home on Phinda Private Game Reserve, where they go at least twice a month except for the European summer, is as much about giving back and getting down to ►



earth, as it is about getting away and recharging. The house has been finished for just over a year and Jessica says it has taken until now for it to really look and feel lived in and not brand new.

Chris Brown, the designer responsible for the contemporary comfort found in all CC Africa's lodges, helped Jessica with the project. 'I really enjoyed working with him, we collaborated so well. He has a wealth of talent and he had fun doing a private home which meant we could really go to town with flourishes like Jenny Gifford cushions because he didn't have the usual practical design constraints, such as heavy people traffic, which would be an issue in a large lodge,' comments Jessica. Not that this house is modest. It is big, spread out, but far from the scale of a multi-villa

family compound. In fact, the Gettys only wanted to accommodate eight adults at a time. 'Eight people fit comfortably into a landrover which is convenient for game drives, so four main bedrooms was our limit, that's all we wanted,' explains Tara. 'I really didn't want anything over the top. My view is that country houses should be comfortable and very anti-bling. In fact, I'm under huge pressure to build a wine cellar, some guests want one, but to me it's not the place.' It is about a quality of life and a level of consciousness in a holistic sense.

'This area is unique ecologically. We scuba or swim at the beach or Lake Sibaya in the morning, where the water is clear, soft and full of dolphins and in the afternoon we can have the other Phinda experience – tracking game. Sometimes we have lunch in the lake, actually in the lake, sitting on chairs knee-deep in the water.'

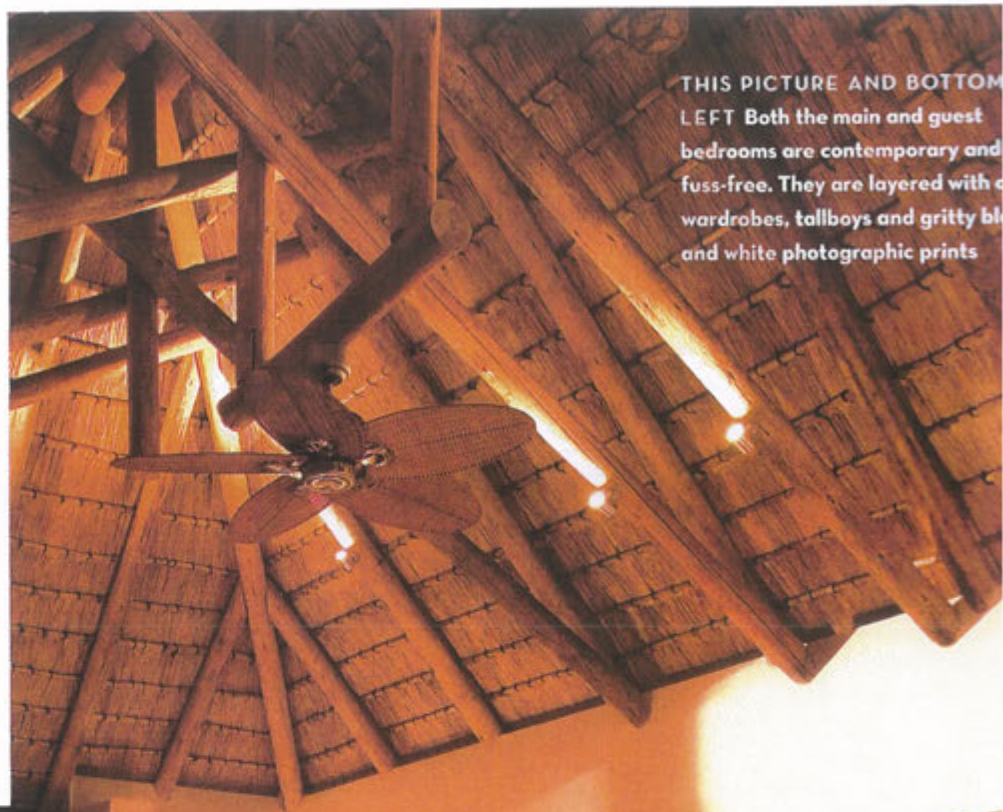
Not only do the Gettys champion the area for its natural heritage, it's also the nerve centre of much of Tara's philanthropic work for Africa Foundation. Founded by CC Africa, the foundation works to empower communities living in or near the various CC Africa lodges in East and Southern Africa, through conservation – primarily tourism. About 80 per cent of Africa Foundation's revenue comes through individual or corporate donations from guests or

**TOP LEFT** The kitchen is a farmhouse kitchen with its own operations. There is nothing hotel-like about the villa except the services available, and guests are immersed in a domestic setting. The villa is supremely child-friendly, interactive and easy-going despite the backup of housekeeping staff and a chef **ABOVE** The bathroom communicates directly to the outdoors through a big pane of glass

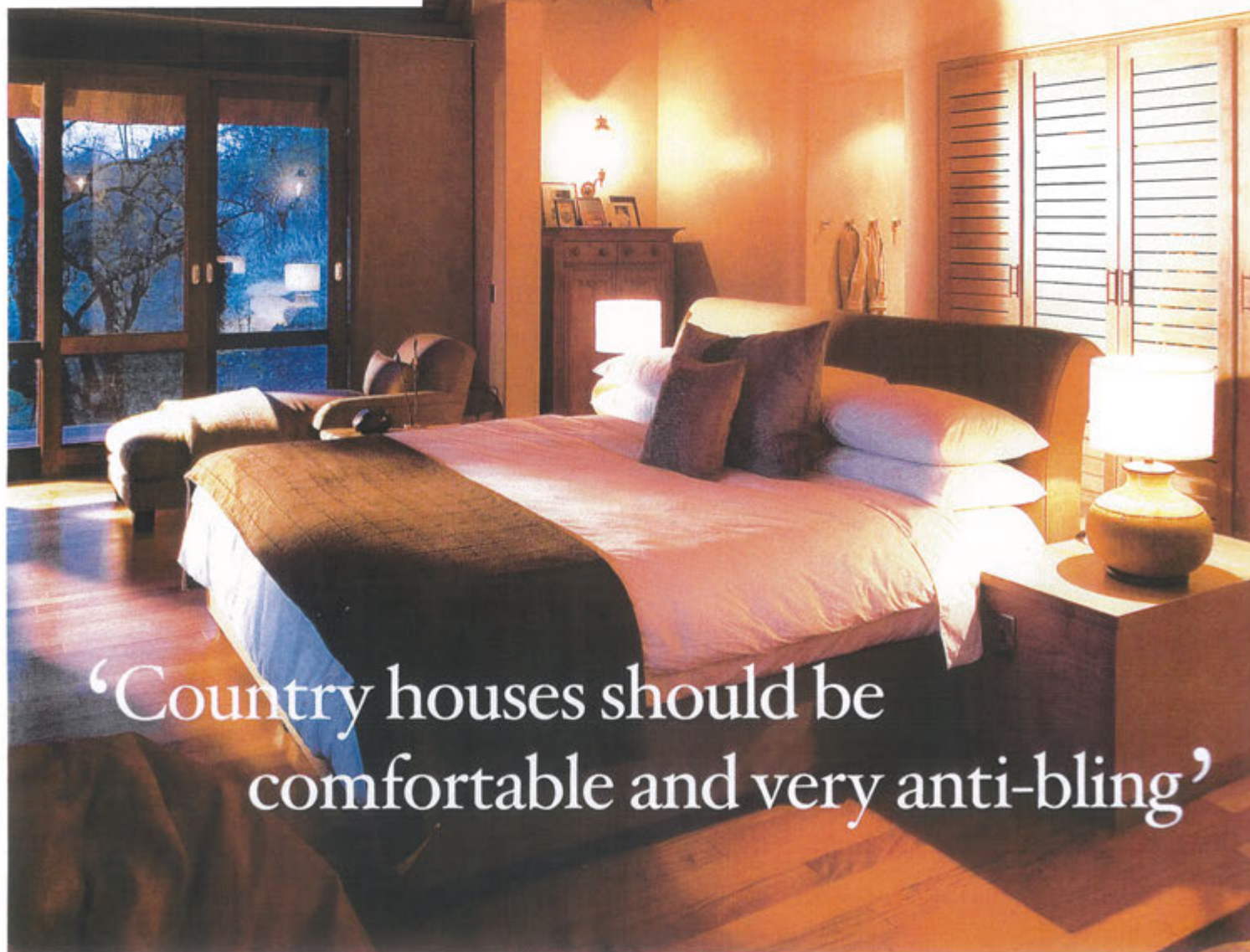


the Getty's fundraising initiatives. Funding is focussed strictly on the community's needs rather than the donors' desires. So how does it work? When donors express a wish to become involved – and it's a worldwide trend that the privileged elite are finding an enriching identity in giving rather than keeping – the Africa Foundation facilitates this process. The donor can choose to support education, income-generating activities or healthcare, in a community of their choice. As a trustee of Africa Foundation and an owner of Zuka, Tara's investment as an eco entrepreneur operates on a global and a grass-roots level where he can see the funding actually shaping the development of the community.

Appropriately, CC Africa manages the Gettys' lodge and runs it as a private villa when the Gettys are away during the local winter. Why bother, I wonder? 'Having a house stand empty in the bush is silly, the monkeys would move in,' says Tara. And then, benevolent big thinker that he is, adds, 'but more specifically, the more people we get here to experience this the better'. ■



THIS PICTURE AND BOTTOM LEFT Both the main and guest bedrooms are contemporary and fuss-free. They are layered with wardrobes, tallboys and gritty black and white photographic prints



‘Country houses should be comfortable and very anti-bling’