

Q&A

with Michelle Garforth & Riaan Venter
FROM LOVE & MORTAR



1 HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED IN DOING THE SHOW 'LOVE & MORTAR'?

Riaan and I have spent a lot of time greening our current home, but unfortunately within an existing structure, addressing insulation requirements which massively reduce carbon emissions, is limited. And so we chose to build our ideal bio-climatic family home – constructing with the environment in the front of our minds. In the process we have learned about viable green construction methods & materials, energy usage, carbon reductions & going off-the-grid, but filtering through the huge volume of information was a process, and we felt we should share our findings, hence the TV show, which ultimately says: green construction in South Africa is possible and here are some suggestions as to how you can do it too.

2 WHAT IS THE CONCEPT OF THE SHOW, LOVE & MORTAR, AND WHAT MAKES IT DIFFERENT FROM ALL THE OTHER DÉCOR SHOWS THAT ARE CURRENTLY ON TELEVISION?

The concept of Love & Mortar is based around South Africa's eco-couple, Michelle and Riaan Garforth-Venter and their quest to build their ultimate green home. It is a South African television first, with Riaan and I inviting the viewers into our lives, revealing how we juggle our busy careers and schedules, all with the daunting task of building and furnishing our first bio-climatic family home. I think the reality and construction aspect definitely makes this show different from other décor shows as we are not just looking at how pretty or great products are, but we are dissecting every aspect of the home, from the land and construction team choices, right the way through to fittings and furnishings. We are looking at how sustainable every aspect of the home is. Sustainability is vital to consider when going green – evaluating all products from cradle to grave. The other aspect that makes this show different is that it is fun – Riaan has been great at teaching me as much as possible about construction and this process has brought Riaan and I even closer together.

3 HOW DO YOU KEEP THE SHOW FRESH AND INTERESTING?

The content itself keeps the show fresh and interesting – the construction of the home has kept Riaan and I on our toes and having to make so many important decisions which will impact not only on the house but on the environment too, has been a challenge. It's seeing these challenges on screen that shows the public that Riaan and I are just like everyone else, trying to do good for the world around us and the family that we are starting.

4 WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE SOMEONE STARTING OUT WITH BUILDING OR HOME IMPROVEMENTS AND WHO WANTS TO INCORPORATE ECO-FRIENDLY ALTERNATIVES TO TRADITIONAL CONSTRUCTION METHODS?

The best advice I can give anyone starting with either building a new home, or renovating their current home, is to ask as many questions as possible and research all the products that are going to be used in the process – check the sustainability or greenness of the products and ask about the manufacturing and installation processes. It is the knowledge that you gain at the start of any construction process that will empower you to make the right choices during the process – don't be afraid to ask questions, question methods or ask for alternatives!

5 HOW DIFFICULT IS IT TO INCORPORATE ECO-FRIENDLY OPTIONS INTO AN EVERYDAY BUILD?

The process is actually relatively simple – the place to start is when considering the placement of the house and the passive solar (how the house is heated through the movement of the sun) consequences. There are many other things that are easy – double cavity walls, the correct insulation, grey water systems and so many more. Again, it is important to evaluate what your needs are and to plan correctly according to those needs.



6 APART FROM BEING BENEFICIAL TO THE PLANET, HOW CAN ECO-FRIENDLY CHOICES BENEFIT HOMEOWNERS?

The long-term benefits are enormous – not only is the home a place which enables you to breathe and live easier, but the financial savings over the lifespan of the home far out-weigh the initial costs at the start of the project!

7 DO YOU THINK SOUTH AFRICA HAS FULLY EMBRACED 'GREEN' ISSUES AND HOW DO WE COMPARE WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD?

South African's are getting there! They are starting to embrace green and sustainable products and practices more thoroughly and are starting to consider the consequences of their actions on the world around them. I still think that South Africa is far behind many countries in the world when it comes to things like recycling, but every bit that we do has a positive impact on the world around us!

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