



# COUNTRY HUB

*In a worldwide exclusive, ELLE DECORATION was afforded the first glimpse into the Old Mac Daddy Luxury Trailer Park in Elgin. Join us for a select tour of its bespoke caravans...*

AS A STYLE STATEMENT, WE DIDN'T THINK IT COULD GET ANY BETTER THAN AN assortment of individually decorated vintage Airstream caravans parked on top of the Grand Daddy Hotel roof in the middle of the Mother City. Yet visionary hoteliers Jody Aufrechtig and Nick Ferguson from the Daddy Group have done it again. And this time, the location for their new trailer park is in the heart of apple country – Elgin, about 50 minutes' drive outside of Cape Town.

Perched on a tree-speckled hillside at the end of a dusty road, Old Mac Daddy looks out over undulating farmland, mirror-like dams and the distant ridge of the Hottentots Holland mountain range. Such peaceful scenery rightfully sets the tone for the development, but when it comes to its design, Old Mac Daddy is no country bumpkin.

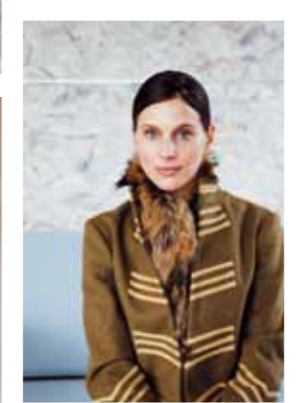
Similar to Grand Daddy's caravans, each trailer has been independently designed by an artist or designer according to their chosen theme (this time anyone could submit a design proposal, which was then voted for by members of the public). The result is 10 perfectly magical and private little worlds, bundled up within the shiny shells of the Airstreams. What sets Old Mac Daddy's caravans apart, however, is their accompanying living units: serene, light-filled zones, consisting of a lounge, en-suite bathroom and private deck.

Wooden walkways connect the trailer suites to each other and to 'The Barn', the main communal building and restaurant that includes a charming apple-themed play area for little ones. In addition there's also 'Daddy's Villa' – a luxurious three-bedroom farmhouse – and two smaller caravans down by a crystal-clear dam.

As a project, Jody admits that it's been 'huge'. From sourcing the trailers in the US to shipping them over, transporting them to Elgin, hauling them up the hill and putting the proper infrastructure in place, Old Mac Daddy has not been without its challenges. But he set out to create 'the kind of place that I'd want to go to on holiday' and he's achieved exactly that: an inspired refuge from the stresses of city life, where visitors emerge not only refreshed from relaxing in exquisite, natural surrounds, but also reinvigorated by the experience of a very special kind of creative energy.



Visit [www.oldmacdaddy.co.za](http://www.oldmacdaddy.co.za)



**'METALMORPHOSIS'**

Commissioned by Dutch beer brand Grolsch to conceptualise a theme that reflects its 'independent, creative spirit', spatial curator **Rotem Shachar** (pictured above) and design agency **Coley Porter Bell** have succeeded in creating an engaging caravan that rewrites the rules of, well, attraction...

'Inspired by the magnetic personality of creative mavericks, we hit on the idea of creating a magnetic, modular environment that guests can reconfigure to reflect their true character and express their creativity,' says Rotem. As such, several magnetic elements have been incorporated into its design, from a 360° magnetic puzzle of the surrounding environment, which doubles up as wallpaper, to the magnetic furniture, shelving, lighting, curtains and even mosquito net that can be moved around at whim. The floor features an oversized magnetic checkerboard and a coffee table in the form of a giant clock tells the time through the movement of iron filings pulled by magnets. But perhaps this caravan's greatest feat is the giant wall of pins, handmade with over 40 000 pins. Guests are invited to leave their own impressions on the wall but it wouldn't be surprising if the wall in turn left an impression on the guests...





**'THE PRIVATE LIFE OF PLANTS'**

Taking Old Mac Daddy's surrounding orchards as a point of departure, and using old artefacts such as an antique globe, books, butterfly nets, scientific apparatus and botanical textbooks, designers **Tara Carmichael** and **Bielle Ross** of **Pelican & Peony** (pictured above left and right respectively) have created the dreamy world of an eccentric botanist – a fantasy figure who observes, collects and reflects on the life of plants.

'We imagined this space to be a quiet retreat that coexists with nature, and at the same time retains a sense of intrigue and exploration,' say Tara and Bielle. Elements such as bell jars, birdcages and a beautifully reconstituted set of second-hand drawers continue this theme of gentle curiosity. Vintage glassware, retro-style fabrics, reclaimed parquet flooring and a weathered leather attaché case add to the caravan's romantic feel, which is offset by scientific notation and cellular structures on the walls. And should you want more evidence of the botanist at work, simply look up: an image of his or her desk, with its test tubes, plants, sketches and notes, has been pasted onto the ceiling, creating an intriguing interplay between the caravan's 2D and 3D installations.



**'FOR BETTER OR FOR BOEREWORS'**

Inspired by her grandparents, family holidays spent driving through the South African countryside, and her affinity for the Karoo, DECO's very own **Julie Kenney** has created the farmhouse of imaginary couple Piet and Sannie Potgieter. 'It's a reinterpretation of the past, with quirky items that reflect and convey the style of a typical Karoo home,' she says.

Years of scouring second-hand shops for treasures have honed Julie's dexterous eye for detail, resulting in a caravan that has nostalgic treats in every corner. Vintage South Africana sets the mood, with old tins of Maltabella porridge, Springbok-embazoned memorabilia, a wall light depicting a timeless ox-wagon scene, and even an original Moffat stove with a 'freshly baked' loaf inside. Yet painted ball-and-claw furniture, a witty Ouma Rusk bedspread and contemporary local fabrics from Design Team keep the theme fresh and updated, too. Best of all are the tiny, often humorous clues to Piet and Sannie's lives, such as the glass of false teeth beside the bed, printed portraits concealed in a cupboard and a Bible with a naughty little secret inside...

To see the making of Julie's caravan, visit [www.elledcoration.co.za](http://www.elledcoration.co.za)





**'GIVE BEES A CHANCE'**

Not only are bees a motif that illustrator **Tamara Joubert** loves using in her work, she's also drawn to the plight of the honeybee's dwindling population due to Colony Collapse Disorder. So it's only natural that she turned to bees when deciding on her theme, one that felt particularly relevant to her, given Old Mac Daddy's apple orchard setting – 'pollination via bees is so integral to agriculture', she explains.

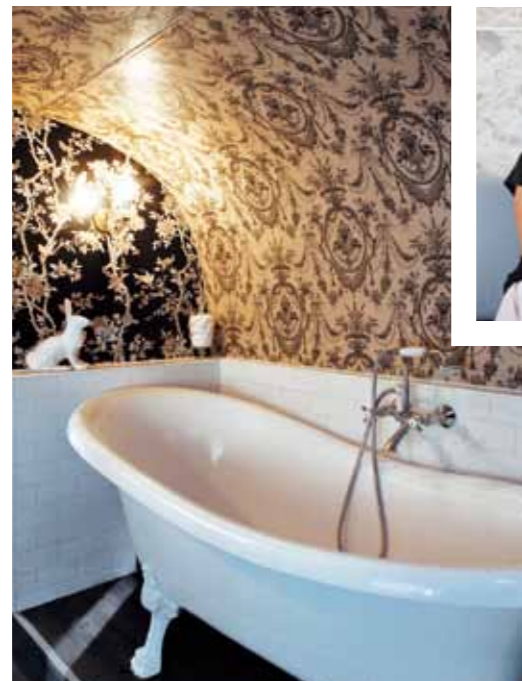
The strong contrast of black and yellow sets the tone of the caravan, while the black-and-white tiled floor and striped curtains add graphic punch. Tamara also used the geometric shape of the honeycomb throughout as a fun design element, from the hexagon patchwork cushions on the bed to wall cladding and an intricate honeycomb wall hanging made from hundreds of little rolls of yellow cellophane. Vinyl decals of illustrated bees dotting the ceiling, a handmade bee sculpture inside a bell jar and a custom-made standing lamp in the shape of a beehive provide perfectly honey-sweet touches. Tamara's favourite piece? The furry black and yellow ottoman – a play on the bee's fuzzy appearance – which takes pride of place in front of the inviting bed.



**'THE DREAM'**

Artist **Sarah Pratt** wants guests to walk into her Airsteam and feel as if they're walking into a painting – more specifically, Henri Rousseau's *The Dream*, his last jungle painting before his death in 1910. 'I've always been inspired by Rousseau's work – about 10 years ago I even painted a wall in my bedroom based on *The Dream* – and when we were told that the caravans were going to be in a rural environment, I liked the idea of saturating the inside with a painting of a jungle, while the real outdoors was just outside the window,' she says.

Every surface within the caravan, barring the lights and a red couch, has been hand-painted to recreate Rousseau's piece – a painstaking process that saw Sarah living and working on site by herself for several weeks. It's a tribute to both Rousseau's work and to southern Africa's vegetation, as the plants of the original painting have been replaced by indigenous ones – 'researched and reproduced in as naive a style as I could manage'. The female figure in *The Dream*, known as Yagwigha, is emulated as a hand-painted cushion, while Sarah made the flower wall lights by pulling apart the petals of fabric flowers and reassembling them to her satisfaction.



**'LIFE BEFORE COLOUR'**

A love for old photographs and antiques – and the stories behind them – was the starting point for interior and fashion stylist **Leasa Mensing**. But it was finding a 3D viewfinder from 1897 that took her theme into another dimension. 'It came with a box of 100-year-old photos of Europe and America, that when seen through the viewfinder, take you right into the picture.'

From there, Leasa was inspired by the notion of time travel, creating a Victorian-style boudoir to 'transport guests to another time and place'. A monochromatic colourway simulates an old black-and-white photograph, while the toile wallpaper and lace curtaining serve as a romantic backdrop to a collection of antiques, framed photographs and silhouettes. But the caravan's best surprise is that of the luxurious slipper bath in the bedroom. 'I love the way it slowly reveals itself as you draw back the fringe curtain,' says Leasa. 'It's really quite seductive...'

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## LIVING UNITS: 'A DETOX OF DECOR'

DECO's former decor editor **Tracy Lynch** was instrumental in creating and project managing Old Mac Daddy's pared-down aesthetic, designing The Barn and each caravan's living unit to feature what she calls a 'detox of decor'.

'The Old Mac Daddy experience is all about being in nature,' she says, 'so I wanted the units to be beautiful and functional, without vying for attention. We echoed the silvery ash of the surrounding trees, and used cost-effective, humble building materials such as corrugated-iron roof sheets, whitewashed pine and OSB flooring.'

Innovative design company Pedersen + Lennard was brought on board to custom make the movable furniture pieces, such as bucket lights and stools, benches that can be cleverly reconfigured and coffee tables inspired by braai grids. Felt carpets by 2 Birds Landing add warmth, while sweeping white curtains make the space 'a bit more glamorous'. And inspect the walls a little closer and you'll discover whimsical references to nature, inspired by jewellery designer Geraldine Fenn's laser-cut brooches...

The result is a series of warm, organic spaces with clean, simple lines – a soothing counterbalance to the caravans' more zany interiors. 'It's like Ikea on holiday,' says Tracy. ■

