

The stately homes of South Africa

A place of his own is every man's dream, though to township Africans this phrase has recently taken on a hollow ring. But there are people with the initiative and cash — to build themselves their ideal home. DRUM called on some of them — and was suitably impressed by their magnificence.

DR. MOHAMED MOMONIAT'S house in Lenasia and the new President Hotel in Eloff Street, Johannesburg, have something important in common. They were both designed by the same firm of architects, Stauch and Vorster. And they both look on to three different streets.

The doctor's home is one of the more beautiful things about Lenasia. Its spaciousness and its exciting design, its mosaics, indoor courtyards, enormous plate glass windows and tennis court make your head spin as you look back from the roof patio over the tin roofs of the lower income houses and your eyes travel towards Tomsville slum, barely half a mile away.

To build a house of these proportions takes confidence and there can be few more exciting ways to spend your money (R45,000 in Dr. Momoniati's case) than to beautify your own environment as best you can.

The Momoniati house hits you from the main road into Lenasia — a perfect window dresser for a group area. Walking through the garden towards the sitting room, children's voices come rippling over the green lawn shouting the tennis score... "thirty-forty". There is a calm, airy atmosphere about the place, the feeling of security and comfort is enough to make you drowsy. The charming Mrs. Momoniati will set her electric mixer whirring and produce a jug of exotic pineapple juice a la South Seas while you talk.

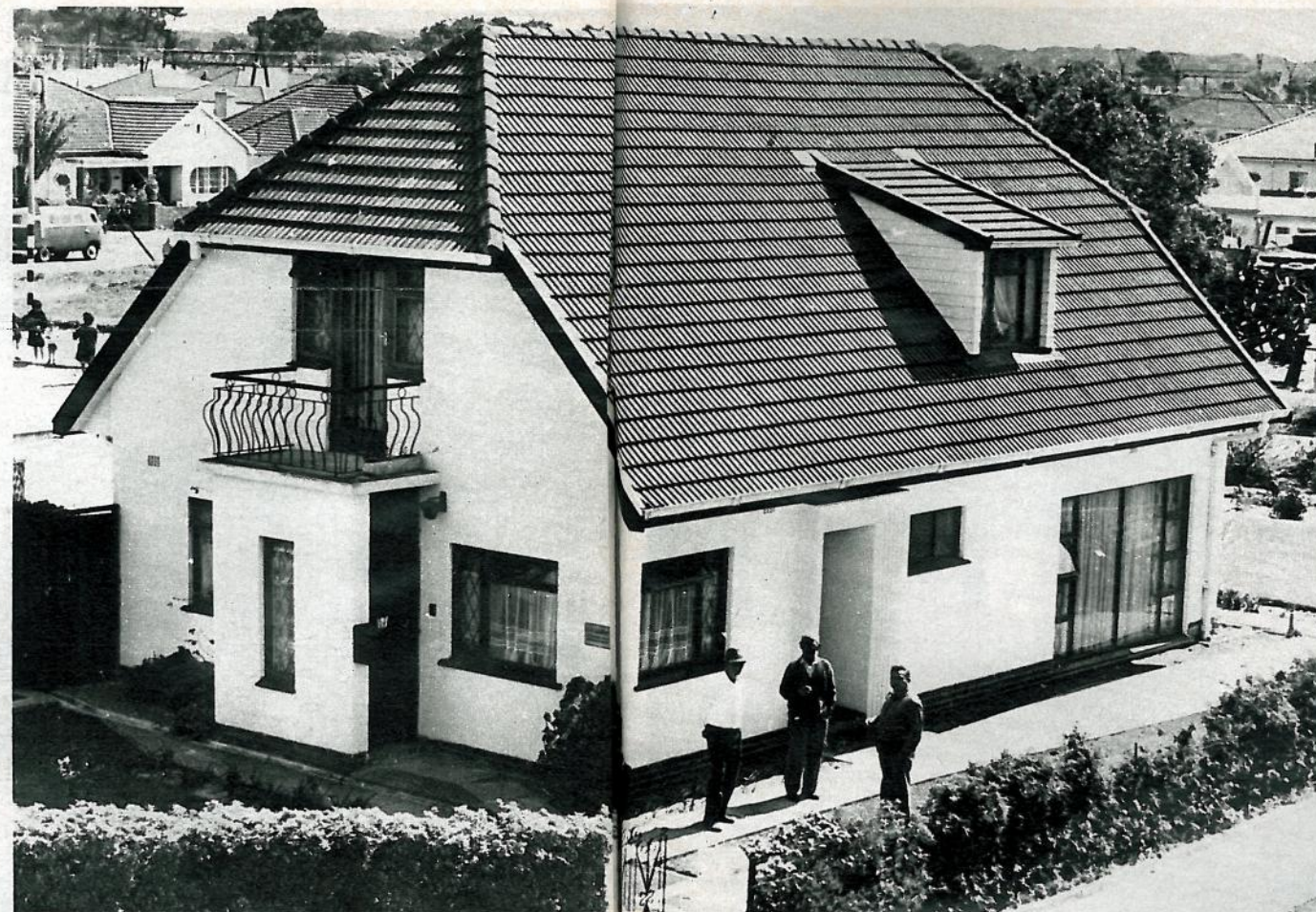
On the wall is a work of art by Beryl Jensen, a copper cut-out, very modern. The curtains billow-

ing in the breeze that always seems to build up over Lenasia are made up of yards of finely printed hessian.

"I saw the Netherlands Bank building in Johannesburg," said Dr. Momoniati. "My bank just happened to be opposite. I had heard of the architects, Stauch and Vorster, but I thought it was unlikely that they would design a house for me. Anyway they came and visited the site. My main suggestions were that there should be lots of space and light; it should be a very modern house with large louvre windows and huge glass doors; but this was impracticable and we had to compromise."

The house is built in an ideal position, facing north-east. Its walls look on to three roads, and its sun decks and roof corridors give an overall view of Lenasia. Inside is an enormous amount of space. The hall looks on to the stairs leading to the three upstairs bedrooms, all with different colour schemes, all decorated with impeccable, very Western taste by the Momoniati's themselves. "We didn't call in an interior decorator," said Mrs. Momoniati. "We didn't like the idea, so we chose all the materials between ourselves. My husband was very flexible about my ideas."

Dr. Momoniati is a completely self-made man. He built up his business as a medical practitioner in Turffontein and still travels there for his practice every day. His Lenasia house has a modern surgery, with a reception room, a drug stock room and office inside the front door. There are always



people waiting around for treatment, and the doctor rarely gets time to enjoy his surroundings. "I can't even play a full game of tennis on a Sunday without being called to the surgery. But of course these are the exigencies of the profession, and I'm used to them by now."

The house is a successful unit — the furniture and decor suits the architectural style perfectly. In the main sitting room are modern kiasat armchairs and sofas, a wooden floor, bookshelves set into the wall and lots of space in the middle of the room. The Momoniatis have resisted the temptation to make their decor "sophisticated", and there is no feeling of extravagance or pretence. There's an atmosphere of honesty and function about their ideas.

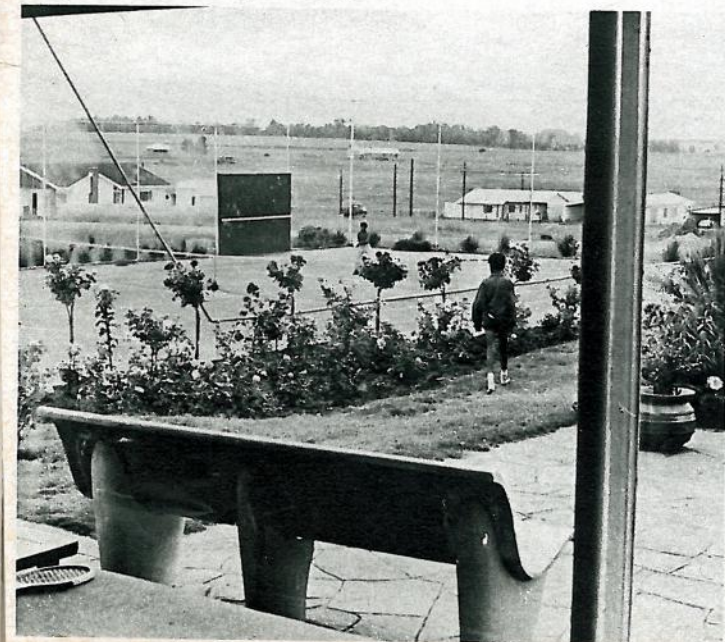
The bathrooms are covered from ceiling to floor and over the floor itself with lush coloured tiles. There are thick pile carpets in the bedrooms. There

Not a mansion, but a fine home which would not be out of place in an English country setting or even on the French Riviera. Its owner is George Santon, a Cape Town architectural draughtsman — a man who should know what quality is.



The kitchen is where a woman spends much of her time. Those of Mrs. Masoeu (left) and Mrs. Momoniati are bright, airy and fun to work in.

Anyone for tennis? The Momoniati family of Lenasia have plenty of room in which to keep fit and healthy, despite the dust of Lenasia.





The sweeping gable of Mr. Logie Moodley's Durban home (left) is only one of its attractions, while (right) who would believe that these were the homes of Cape farm labourers? Below: Dr. Mohamed Momoniat's house makes an impressive sight from road level.



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is a separate suite on the ground floor for Dr. Mamoniati's invalid mother. The kitchen is enormous, functional, American and full of gadgets. It's a fantastic place for a child to grow up, especially in Non-White South Africa.

MR. PETER MASOEU is a Sharpeville businessman who has expanded his trade into Sobokeng, a new African township about fourteen miles out of Vereeniging. He built his house two years ago from a design by a White Vereeniging architect.

In Sharpeville it stands out like a glittering Taj Mahal among the rows of regular township houses which surround it. As a contrast to the Mamoniati mansion, Mr. Masoeru's house has a lacquered atmosphere about it. The paving stones on the long patio which stretches the length of the house are, in fact, lacquered, and the inside of the house looks like a showpiece where nobody has sat in any of the chairs for more than one minute.

The warmest parts of the house, colour and comfort wise, are the bedrooms. The Masoerues' bedroom and the spare room have expensive looking upholstery and dazzling white fittings. The dining room has beautiful imitation Sheridan table and chairs.

The garden, which is still being developed by Mrs. Masoeru, is decorated by a fountain at the end of the long, narrow strip of front lawn. The most impressive part of the outside design is the front of the house — a long, low strip of large windows to give a streamlined effect.

ON a quiet hill, commanding a panoramic view of the distant Umgeni mouth, stands the home of Mr. Bobby Singh, owner of a large meat market in Durban. Although striking in outside appearance because of the contrast of the white, shimmering walls and the black, mesister slated roof, the home is warm within, characterised by subdued colours and comfortable furniture, most of which has been imported from Italy and France.

"The password here is warmth and comfort," said Mr. Singh. "This is the fulfilment of a life-long dream; I have always wanted a house of my own, a house of my own creation, and now I'm satisfied."

A spacious green lawn surrounds the house, and bright blossoms decorate the lower edges of the white walls. Walking through his home, Mr. Singh pointed to a large painted plaque on the wall facing the door. "The open hands holding the lotus flower signify welcome," he said. "It was done by an Italian sculptor who did another one in the lounge, copied from a Diwali card I bought in India."

One of the main features of the house is the dining room, which is styled in typical Italian fashion. The whole room smells of the rare Italian wood that was used to make the suite. Costing more than R2,000, this set of six chairs, table and cupboard took Italian carpenters six months to complete, and, says Mr. Singh, is the only one of its kind in the country.

In the cupboard are three treasured crockery sets brought back by Mr. Singh from China and Kashmir. "Only the best will do for me," said Mr. Singh. A beautiful circular Chinese carpet adorns the centre of the lounge. From the ceiling hangs a sparkling, 24-carat gold chandelier. "It will not tarnish," quipped Mr. Singh. A baby grand piano stands opposite a stereophonic amplifier from which oozed soft music.

Mr. Singh is not interested in emulating the efforts of others in his own home. "All I look for

is comfort. You will notice that I have not gone in for many expensive carpets. This is because I have five children at home and such a move would be unwise.

"There are seven bedrooms in all, each comfortably carpeted and having its own air-conditioning system. Each bedroom has its own adjoining bathroom. The walls of the bathrooms are covered with tiles specially imported from Italy.

"I wonder if you've noticed the small table set in the lounge. It was bought in India and has an inlaid ivory picture of Indian village life. These cigarette boxes over here give out soft music as soon as you open them," continued Mr. Singh.

"This is my dream house and I'm really proud of it because I took more than a year to plan it. I wanted a home, you see, not a house."

THE picturesque home of Mr. Logie Moodley, a Tongaat building contractor, stands at the bottom of a lush, green hill along the North Coast road, facing the blue waters of the Indian Ocean. Built in Swiss Tudor style, the house blends well with the quiet and restful atmosphere of the surroundings.

"When our home in Pietermaritzburg was threatened by the Group Areas Act, I began planning my new home," said Mr. Moodley. "I always wanted a peaceful, English-looking home in a peaceful, English-looking district. And now I've found it — green grass, fresh air, good neighbours and all the rest that goes with it."

The double-storied house stands with a sweeping black gable in the front, angled right down into the ground. This provides an interesting pattern to the front of the house and also serves to enhance the contrast of the white walls on the outside with the black roof. "To give the home the feeling of freshness, you will notice that the front is almost completely walled in glass. This provides a cool and refreshing effect," said Mr. Moodley.

The front door opens into a wide entrance hall, leading to a large bedroom on the one side and a beautifully furnished kitchen and dining room on the other. "All the furniture is local," explained Mr. Moodley. "I did not want to be extravagant and import the furniture when I could easily find the same things locally."

The ground floor also houses a spacious smoking room, a double garage and a recreation room with full-sized billiards and table tennis tables. Said Mr. Moodley: "This recreation room became necessary after I realised that, since the house was

situated about 20 miles from Durban, the children had a right to enjoy the same pleasures that they would enjoy in town. For this purpose also, I had a private swimming pool built in front of the house."

Four bedrooms, two lavishly-tiled bathrooms, a music room and a palatial lounge complete the upper floor.

THERE'S one characteristic that the Coloured people can boast of as being superior to those of their fellow communities, and that is their ability to live well — under any circumstances. From the rural farm worker in the lush valleys of Stellenbosch to the professional and business elite on the scenic heights of Signal Hill, Coloureds are surviving the initial disruption of the Group Areas earthquake and are now settling gracefully into hundreds of mini-manors all over the Cape.

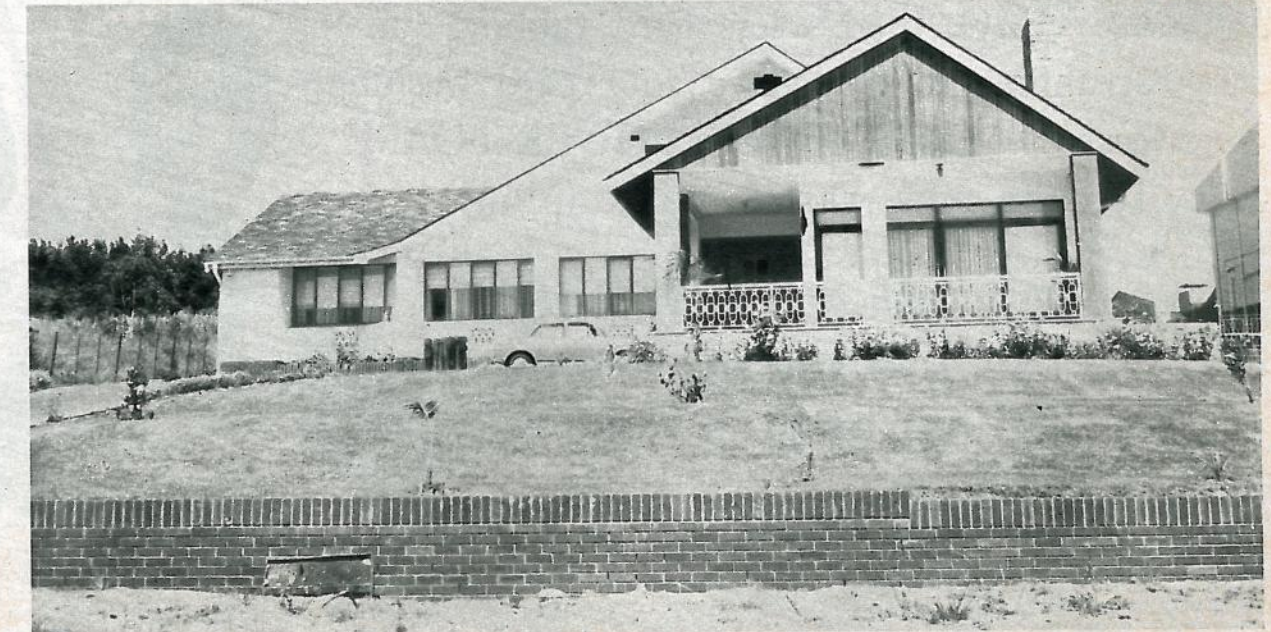
Down on the farm, labourers are shielded from housing problems by farm owners who erect artistically designed old-world homes on the property for their comfort. Here, with sustained honesty and hard work he is assured that this home is for him and his children, and their children — as long as they remain employed on that farm.

In the suburbs, a taste of the good life begins in the plush, elite areas such as Fairways, on Golf Estate; Sunlands, in Wetton; Pinati and Portia Estate, in Lansdowne and Hazendaal in Athlone. Here, pocket-size palaces are mushrooming much to the satisfaction of the supporters of separate development who escort foreign visitors to these "showpieces". Then there is the exclusive Coloured suburb on Signal Hill where the successful can enjoy the highest position available to their group in the Cape.

But the cream of the crop are living in the once-White, now-Coloured area in Retreat. Here, the ultra-elite, who have not migrated to Canada, have unobtrusively moved into the rambling mansions surrounded by park-like gardens, and are basking on the banks of the Princess Lake (their own property) like sunburnt millionaires.

One of the most tastefully designed homes is the two-storied cottage of George M. Santon, an architectural draughtsman and South Africa's only Non-White Sworn Appraiser. Here, in Minor Manor, in Hazendaal Estate, Mr. Santon, his wife and their son and daughter enjoy modern living in its finely furnished interior — a showpiece home fit to grace any suburb in the world.

Mrs. Peter Masoeru enjoys her garden (below) but she also appreciates indoor comfort, as in this splendid bedroom (right).



Keystone at Mr. Bobby Singh's house is comfort.