

## Lookbook Studio's cofounder, Pieter Bruwer

*House and Leisure* is created by Lookbook Studio's creative and commercial team, which is supported by a wider network of respected writers, photographers and specialist contributing editors. Lookbook Studio was born of a passion for decor and design and a belief in the value of the editor's eye to discern, curate and craft quality, niche content.

 By [Evan-Lee Courie](#) 1 Sep 2021



Pieter Bruwer, cofounder of Lookbook Studio

Cofounded by entrepreneur Pieter Bruwer and creative director and editor Charl Edwards in mid-2020, the independent media company and creative content studio went on to announce the acquisition of *House and Leisure* in December 2020, after the 28-year-old publication's last edition was circulated under Associated Media Publishing in April of the same year.

Pieter Bruwer shares more of the journey of bringing *House and Leisure* back onto the shelves.

### **What does your job entail and what does your average workday look like these days?**

As one of the co-founders of Lookbook, the startup that bought the *House and Leisure* brand out of a liquidation, my average workday is still all-encompassing. We really started the business from scratch – formalities such as company registration, exploring new business models, creating a studio to meet the needs of a modern media company, recruiting a talented team, reaching out to the creative industry, and creating a new distribution network.

Of course, all of this is to successfully bring a re-designed legacy brand back as a boutique quarterly publication. It is still very much a work-in-progress with many traditional publishing ideas needing to be challenged (there is after all a reason why the previous publishers of *House and Leisure* filed for liquidation).

### **What excites you most about your role?**

My excitement is twofold. The first is the mammoth challenge of creating/developing/finding a new business model that is financially viable – and a key part of finding a new business model is producing/crafting a uniquely exciting *House and Leisure* that our audience will enjoy and hopefully hold on to. I certainly hope that anybody who has read the ‘Escape issue’ will agree.



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The other is the potential/opportunity to make a significant contribution to the decor and design industry and the many people whose livelihoods depend on it. We can be a ‘shopfront’ to the industry and if done well, hopefully, contribute to the success of many small businesses.

### ▣ ***Can you tell us a bit about your career journey prior to your current role?***

Namibian born and raised, I am an entrepreneur at heart and passionate about education, good design, intriguing architecture and innovative aesthetics. After graduating with a Technical Teaching Degree at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, I went on to complete a MBA at Stellenbosch University Business School. My first job was with a foundation in an informal settlement in Cape Town where I helped individuals start their small businesses.

My eye for business saw me divide my time between lecturing at a college and planning to start my own cabinet-making business. During this time as a lecturer, I helped compile a curriculum in entrepreneurship for TVET colleges in South Africa which ultimately led to creating my own student guide which I started to sell. With entrepreneurship in my veins, I used this textbook to start a publishing company, specialising in educational textbooks.

During my 21 years as CEO of Future Managers, I also helped start two architectural firms. In 2017, I felt it was time to explore something more creative, so I sold the education publishing company. Always on the lookout for new opportunities, I (during the level 5 lockdown in 2020) heard about Associated Media Publishing closing its doors and reached out to the *House and Leisure* editor-in-chief, Charl Edwards. Not long after our first meeting, the two of us opened Lookbook. In a serendipitous turn of events, on 11 February 2021, Lookbook’s publishing rights to relaunch *House and Leisure* were approved by the liquidator, and the exit as CEO and shareholder of Future Managers became final.

I’m incredibly conscious of all the challenges we face as a country and hope that by partnering with like-minded companies, Lookbook, through *House and Leisure* and *Lookbook Journal*, will have the ability to showcase creative South Africans in the decor and design industry and cast a light on these inspiring small businesses, helping them thrive.

### ▣ ***How would you define your brand?***

Lookbook is a creative content studio and independent media company that showcases, spotlights and supports the decor and design industry through the editor’s eye and the art of visual storytelling.

We create editorial content for our own print and digital platforms being *House and Leisure* and *The Lookbook Journal*, and for other brands, both large and small.

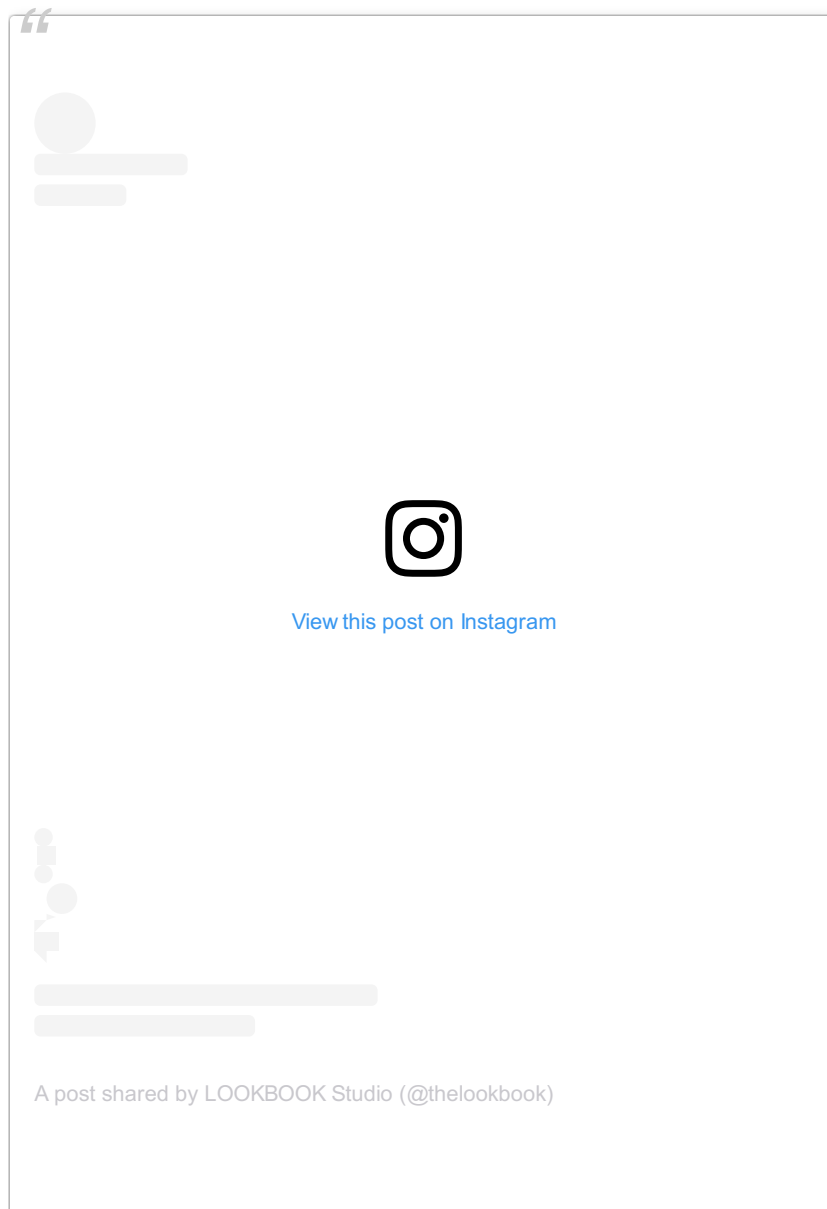
We believe in the value of slow, curated content.

Words that define us are:

- **Authentic** – trustworthy, editorial integrity, independent
- **Conscious** – ethical, awareness of the world we live in and the people in it, sustainability
- **Inclusive** – diverse team and voices
- **Collaborative** – work with creatives, brands and makers
- **Directional** – inspiring, thought leader, innovative, pioneering, bold
- **Useful** – showcase, spotlight, support and service our audience, consumers and the industry
- **Playful** – irreverent, fun

### 📌 ***What are some of your most recent brand campaigns and the rationales behind them?***

The *House and Leisure* brand is a truly South African legacy brand that is already widely recognised, however, our challenge is to tell both our existing audience as well as a new potential audience that we have relaunched and of course, where they can find us. The fact that ‘we are on the cover’ of each magazine we publish helps immensely with brand visibility, but that is not enough. We have a significant social media following and a large newsletter database which we use on a weekly basis. In other words, we are using digital channels to raise the brand awareness of our print title.



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**■ Tell us about your most successful marketing campaign.**

*House and Leisure* was part of the Design Joburg Collective held in Kramerville earlier this year. With a shared audience in mind, we participated in a collaboration with the Weylandts Kramerville store and Public Wine, an online wine e-commerce site, to recreate the cover of the relaunch issue, *Escape*. Visitors at the event could literally be ‘on the cover of *House and Leisure*’ and the response was immediate and fantastic.

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[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by LOOKBOOK Studio (@thelookbook)

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**■ What other sectors impact your industry?**

The creative sector as a whole, which includes architects, artists, artisans, decorators and designers, has a large impact on us – as well as the expansive sectors of hospitality and travel. The past year has taught us that we suddenly live in a different world, meaning more than ever the technology sector and eCommerce space now impacts us directly too.

**■ With the Covid-19 pandemic, what are the biggest challenges when it comes to marketing?**

The old-style launches and campaign events are mostly not possible or only to be done on a very small scale. It's therefore far more difficult to be visible and to interact in person with our audience. Given the profile and size of our audience, social media is very important but also has its limitations.

A magazine, or a journal as we now prefer to call *House and Leisure*, is a very real experience – you can touch it, feel the (textures of) paper, smell it and of course you can see it without the need to turn something on or click on a search engine. We need to market *House and Leisure* as something you want to lay your hands on and collect, something you'd keep on your coffee table because it's so beautiful.

❖ ***In your opinion, what do you think are the most successful channels for getting your brand message out there?***

The business environment changed quite dramatically over the last year and a bit. Some will point to digital channels and specifically social media; however, we have also taken the approach of advertising our online offerings in our own publication. We are really trying hard to form strategic partnerships with other brands with whom we share a similar target market. Co-branding gives us 'extra legs' to reach a wider audience and of course, we want to grow our market. I sense this is why so many brands are happy that *House and Leisure* is back; we offer both print and digital platforms, as a kind of a 'super influencer'.

❖ ***When it comes to marketing efforts, what can brands no longer ignore?***

“ Brands need to be conscious of the world we live in. This means being conscious about the environment, conscious about health, conscious about our socio-economic inequalities and contemplating the role a brand can play to make a positive difference. ”

❖ ***What career advice would you give to aspirant young marketing professionals?***

Brands are incredibly powerful and take years to cultivate. A brand gives a product a personality. The values underpinning a brand are sacred and not to be compromised.

*The Spring 2021 issue is now out on shelves and is themed 'Bloom'.*

## ABOUT EVAN-LEE COURIE

Group Editor: Retail and Lifestyle  
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