



WHITER SHADES OF PALE

location: Oubaai Golf Estate, E. Cape
architecture: Nico van der Meulen
interior design: Phia van der Merwe, M Square Lifestyle Design
interior decoration: George de Haast

ON A VERDANT PLOT OF LAND OF 1 850M², THIS HOUSE – OF JUST 710M² UNDER COVER – IS BUILT ON WHAT WAS FARMLAND AND IS NOW THE GOLF ESTATE OWNED BY RENOWNED SA GOLFER ERNIE ELS. ►

these pages: A protected atrium on the north side of the living area creates a wind-free retreat on blustery days and a private space for sun tanning.



above: Euro Casa installed the custom-designed kitchen as the designer appreciates the high quality and simple, yet elegant lines of their furniture designating it ideal for this home. Built-in cupboards and vanities were handled by Euro Mobil. The kitchen was finished in white, against creamy marble, to make the backdrop to the interiors as neutral as possible, but at the same time referencing the timeless sun-bleached beach houses of our collective memory.

Designer George de Haast was tasked with handling the interior decoration of this seaside home designed by architect Nico van der Meulen. He recalls: 'It was quite clear from the start that the client wanted a modern interior. The architecture of the house spelled out what should be done within a shell of mostly glass and linear profiles. My clients, being from the Sixties' era, wanted a mix of modern and retro periods.'

The house has five en suite bedrooms, including the master suite, and every room overlooks the sea, with the exception of the scullery and guest toilet. A staircase in glass – and the bridge above – connect the main suite to the rest of the

house, which is primarily glass-enshrouded; a very appealing, cutting-edge feature of the architecture.

Says De Haast: 'Wherever one is in the house, there is total consciousness of the sea outside. The colours chosen are mostly tones of black and white as the clients did not identify with bright colours, considering that one can tire of them and that they may become disturbing long-term.'

Unusual features include organic tree sculptures, used against the wall in the entrance and other key locations and the designer laid plain grass around the swimming pool, together with indigenous plants from the area, grouped together in an uber natural effect.

opposite (top left): Phia van der Merwe's design of the lightweight, stainless steel / glass staircase and bridge reinforced the transparency of the architecture. The palette was restricted to stone, steel, glass and wood; exterior colours were selected to blend with the fynbos and rocky outcrops on the beach.



Comment from the architect:

'We were faced with a vacant stand with a 180° view over the ocean. The clients required an open-plan, low-maintenance – yet simultaneously – glamorous home, with maximum views of the ocean from all rooms.

'The main objective was to create a house that the family will enjoy for many years, not only as a holiday home, but also as a retirement retreat for the future. The architecture and interior design had to be fresh and relevant, and also remain a viable investment ongoing.

'We therefore designed a structure that is transparent form both north and south elevations. It's possible to stand behind the house on the north side and view the ocean on the opposite side through the interior, when the blinds are open. The living area is a 20m by 12m open-plan space without any columns, partially double volume, with an uninterrupted view of the ocean from the kitchen, lanai, dining, billiard room, spa plus guest bedroom and bathroom, across the 18m long infinity-edge pool. From the porte-cochère one can look right through the house to the ocean on the other side.

Entering the massive glass front door one overlooks the living space to the left through a 23m opening between columns; beyond is a 180° view over the pool to the ocean

The stainless steel staircase floats above a koi-pond with views over the living space and the pool, and leads onto a glass bridge across the double-volume space to the main suite. From the porte-cochère the staircase is encased in a glass box, with views through it to the sea. ▶





left: All bathrooms were designed to have full views of the ocean.



All the bedrooms and bathrooms have wall-to-wall sliding doors to the south and, due to the curved roof, it was possible to install high-level north-facing windows. The main suite is an open-plan layout – with an enclosed / separate compartment for the toilet and bidet – with a full glass wall facing the ocean and a large expanse of north-facing windows / sliding doors.

The architecture was a response to the brief and site, albeit in the contemporary idiom. The inspiration was the site, the views and a firm belief that we required to build only the absolute minimum walls, in order to create a building that was as transparent as possible, with a minimum of structural elements.

The interior design – as opposed to the interior decoration – was handled by M Square Lifestyle Design and is based on a light, contemporary canvas. ■