



seaside sanctuary



Words by Lynette Botha Photography by Greg Cox a Frank Features production



Set against the cliffs of Hermanus, this subtle yet sophisticated seaside retreat is a tribute to South Africa's coastal heritage and appears as if it's always inhabited the rugged rocks on which it rests. Its modern, minimalist twists on the idea of the traditional fisherman's cottage create a haven of rest and relaxation for a young family.

Previous spreads The views stretch all the way across Walker Bay, with the home seamlessly integrating with the landscape. A built-in daybed provides the perfect spot for lounging in the sun, its windows almost disappearing so that occupants feel suspended over the ocean. The sun, sea and sky dictate the rhythm of days spent here, with doing very little high on the agenda. **Right** The home's location is maximised by a central connecting passage that overlooks the ocean on one side and the back garden on the other. The outdoor entertainment area invites long, languorous dining, while watching the ocean's ever-changing moods.





Designed by Karen Newman and her team from Newman Architecture and Design, this family holiday home strikes the perfect balance between unassuming charm and relaxed elegance. The serene hideaway in Hermanus feels as though it has always belonged to the rocky shores it stands upon – exuding an essence of ‘quiet luxury’ through its harmony with nature, thoughtful craftsmanship and deeply ingrained respect for local heritage.

It’s the holiday home of a young couple – a finance executive and a brand specialist – and their three children, and the family savours the unhurried pace of their coastal escape, longing to one day call it home full-time.

‘The clients envisioned a soulful retreat that seamlessly integrates with its natural setting, reflecting comfort, inspiration and a sense of restoration,’ explains Karen. ‘They were looking for a home that honours the land’s natural beauty, with native vegetation restored as though untouched, and a thoughtful blend of old and new that pays homage to the historic charm of Hermanus. Prioritising sea views and a palette of locally sourced, natural materials was also top priority – they wanted craftsmanship that celebrates tradition, resulting in a humble, timeless structure that speaks quietly yet profoundly.’ The result? An understated, graceful home that is unassuming in its elegance.

Karen’s inspiration for creating a sequence of cosy, low-profile structures connected by sleek, modern, flat roofs was inspired by the simple, practical beauty of the early 20th-century fisherman’s cottages along the coast. These traditional cottages, with their pitched roofs and weathered façades, aligned with her vision of ‘non architecture’, a design philosophy she describes as a conscious attempt to let the house blend rather than command attention. ‘It’s more like a collection of familiar forms,’ she explains, ‘a series of cottages where each roofline seems to almost whisper, blending with the ocean and the rocky surrounds.’

During the design process, Karen and her team faced an interesting challenge – a ‘dust bowl’ of a site, as she calls it, previously owned by someone who had left it scarred and barren. Local residents were concerned about any new development affecting the natural beauty of the area. Yet, when Karen’s client bought the land and sought her expertise, he was clear about his vision for a home that would seamlessly fit into the rugged landscape without disturbing its serene charm.

‘I always explain to my clients up front that I create homes

with “good manners”,’ she smiles, ‘in this instance, a place that wouldn’t impose itself on the landscape but rather would seem like it had simply grown out of the rocks.’

With this goal, Karen designed a structure that seems to rise gently from its surroundings, a home that looks out to sea with a humble, grounded presence.

Integral to the project was ‘The Keep’, an old stone ruin on the property that once served as a watchtower for coastal lookouts. Rather than demolish this piece of history, Karen and her team restored the structure, transforming it into a standalone entertainment space with its own kitchen and lounging areas – a nod to heritage that feels authentic and timeless, and more importantly a space where the family and guests can retreat, capturing the same spirit of relaxation that permeates the whole property.

The interiors are a cocoon of soft, neutral whites, taupes and beiges that don’t compete with the ever-changing colours of the ocean outside, allowing the natural beauty of the site to set the mood from morning to evening. The furnishings lean toward relaxed, coastal chic – raw linens, generous seating and finishes that encourage comfort and simple living. ‘It’s a bit of slow living by design,’ continues Karen. ‘We wanted the family to feel they could kick off their shoes and relax for hours in any part of the home.’

Outside, the sensitivity to the environment shines through again in the treatment of the landscape and garden. A glass-walled passage connects the front-facing sea view to a sheltered garden at the back, where the family can enjoy outdoor living in a sunlit space shielded from the brisk coastal breeze. The organically shaped pool, inspired by natural rock pools, sits burrowed in this rear garden, adding an element of whimsy and a hint of nature’s touch within the otherwise manicured landscape. ‘We thought of it as a playful nod to the natural pools you find along the coast,’ Karen says, ‘but with all the convenience and beauty of a modern design.’

In the end, this Hermanus home achieves something rare: a sense of being untouched by time. As Karen herself describes, the house is ‘an exercise in restraint and subtlety, a place where you feel the sea and landscape around you.’ The structure’s thoughtful, quiet elegance and intimate connection to the land have earned it the community’s approval and admiration – a retreat that seems as though it has always belonged to the rocky shores, waiting for its owners to discover it and call it home. ● [@newman_architecture_design](#)

Left Inside the main house, Karen and her team embraced natural materials that would echo the exterior landscape while creating a calm, inviting environment. Aged poplar timber beams and off-shutter concrete add a rawness that contrasts with soft, elegant furnishings and finishes. **Next spread** The views are the focal point throughout, with even the bathrooms connecting the home to the outdoors.

