



old soul

A restrained, rustic getaway off South Africa's Western Cape bows to the regal landscape

By Stéphanie Hunt Photographs by Luanne Toms/Greg Cox/Frank Features

Aiming to respect its incredible landscape while restoring a primitive lighthouse on the site (opposite), architect/designer Karen Newman marries soulful natural materials like rock and timber with textural modernist furniture.



PRODUCTION BY KERRY FISCHE PRODUCTION



Curvy sofas and chairs were custom designed by Newman, as were the solid stone side table and coffee table, adding contemporary flair to the old-world stone and exposed wood.

Below: Open to the dining room and outdoor entertaining space, the kitchen is both airy and functional, featuring a floating island and open shelving. Natural materials—oak cabinets, marble countertops, limestone flooring—are the main ingredients.



Southern right whales have the right idea when it comes to choosing a breeding ground. Every year from June to November, the endangered species can be seen breaching in this spectacular cove off South Africa's Western Cape, adding yet another marvel to the majestic view along the Overberg region's pristine coast near the popular town of Hermanus. Dramatic mountains and geologic formations surrounded by lush flora and fauna add to the magic, and then there's the prime view of Roman Rock—a draw for big-wave surfers around the globe. Given the unparalleled setting, these homeowners knew they'd found the spot for their dream house, but their architect, Karen Newman of Newman Architecture and Design, was less certain.

"This 1,500-acre plot was the last vacant lot on this stretch of coastline. I wasn't sure anything should be built here," says Newman, who'd grown up coming to Hermanus. To ease her mind, Newman designed a "house with good manners," or rather, a vacation home composed of interconnected, well-mannered cottages constructed of natural Cape granite, timber, and slate that meld with the landscape. "I was inspired by the humility of the fisherman's cottages you find all along the Cape coastline," she explains. Her sensitively designed blend of Dutch Cape gabled structures with low-slung, flat-roofed hyphens, all whitewashed in a milky finish, have an old-soul appeal. Oversize windows overlooking the cove offer a soul-stirring view.

"We felt strongly that we didn't want to emulate the symmetry and ultra-modern design of so many new-build beach houses on this coastline," says the homeowner, who comes here with her husband and three young daughters as often as possible. "We wanted our



Soaring cathedral ceilings create a lofty backdrop for Newman's custom-designed, locally made nest chandelier. A hefty Oregon pine table grounds the room, while custom Scandinavian-inspired chairs, covered in practical Sunbrella fabric, add softness.

The spectacular views of
the South African coast,
near the town of Hermanus





An old heritage light-house, now completely restored, still offers quite the lookout, with a custom-fit daybed with cushions crafted from vintage French flour sacks nestled in the glass nook.



Creamy Romo fabrics on the custom upholstered bed and Newman-designed furnishings make the primary bedroom a soothing, neutral oasis.

Below: Soaking in sublime views, a metal tub from Victorian Bathrooms and stone stool from Cécile & Boyd Interiors are the ultimate in elegant simplicity.

house to feel like it belonged.” Ruins of an old primitive lighthouse discovered on the grounds, dubbed The Keep and now fully restored and incorporated into the footprint, also informed Newman’s contemporary take on vernacular architecture. “All the hard edges, even inside the house, have been rounded off to give a more organic, nostalgic shape redolent of the old-school softness of handmade plaster, although the scale on this house is exaggerated,” she says.

Interiors designed by Newman and her partner Tamsyn Bowren feature materials and finishes honed by local artisans and artists that reference the area’s “incredible flora and fauna,” the homeowner says, all of which contribute to the six-bedroom home’s sense of place. Exposed-stone walls outside and in supply earthy gravitas and texture, while rough-cut poplar planks serve as timber roof beams, and reclaimed aged wood is used for cabinetry and paneling. Imperfect, distressed wooden floors, some in a herringbone pattern, are a warm contrast to plaster walls. Large sliding doors in the main living space disappear into the wall pockets, welcoming in the salty air for breezy indoor-outdoor entertaining. An alfresco dining area connecting the two main structures is a portal to both the backyard pool courtyard and the oceanfront.

“Using materials that are honest and high-end gives a cohesive sense of luxury throughout, matching the magnificence of what lies outdoors,” Newman says. “We kept distractions to a minimum and the aesthetic thread consistent.” Senuously curved living room sofas designed by Newman and mod upholstered dining chairs, all in white, enhance the sophisticated, serene palette, while the homeowners’ collection of Cape copperware and auction finds from the Karoo and the West Coast add eclectic flavor. It all makes for a refined family retreat,



a place where young girls can wander and be wowed, and their parents can relax and drink in the natural beauty. The homeowners told Newman they dreamed of a timeless, future-proofed house saturated with a sense of place. And precisely because Newman loves *this* place so much, she delivered exactly that, creating a spot that this family, just like the whales, return to again and again, with reverence and awe each time.

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A courtyard between the kitchen and living areas and bedroom wing creates a lovely look-through from the backyard pool to the ocean. Living room sliding doors disappear completely, making for a generous outdoor entertaining space.

