



SUM OF ITS PARTS

location: Clifton, Cape Town
architecture: Aurelio Cimato of CM Architects and Jenny Mills of Jenny Mills Architects
interior design: Arlene Rottanburg of Summersun Property Designs
photography: Toni Jade Efune

LECKHAMPTON COURT IS HIGH UP ON KLOOF ROAD, CLIFTON. WITH UNINTERRUPTED VIEWS OF ALL FOUR BEACHES, IT HAS MOUNTAIN VIEWS OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES AS WELL AS CHAPMAN'S PEAK. THE FINISHED APARTMENT RESULTED FROM THE GUTTING AND DEMOLISHING OF AN EXISTING UNIT ACQUIRED TWO YEARS EARLIER. ▶



these pages: There is clever detail within this interior; it includes: floating marble shelves, hand-carved shopfitting and ceilings, designed intelligently over the lounge and dining room areas, to define these spaces.



Built in 1926 as a residence, Leckhampton Court was some years later converted into a Sectional Title Scheme with only eight apartments in the entire block; its unique feature being that almost all the apartments have proper gardens and swimming pools.

Inspired by Donna Karan's boutiques in London and the USA, interior designer Arlene Rottanburg decided to use a polished taupe plaster as an integral part of the overall design; elevated to an architectural feature in its own right. A modern reworking of a truly ancient technique, the plaster mix is close to the traditional recipe consisting of polished lime stucco and well-aged slaked lime, combined with natural stone aggregates and tinted with natural pigments.

This plaster is hand-trowelled in successfully thinner layers until the desired effect is achieved. Other inspiration was sourced from Giorgio Armani who created 'a cabin on the sea' at his holiday home in Italy. Taking a cue from this concept, Ms Rottanburg chose a style she describes as Eco-Chic in the form of furniture and sculpture to match the internal architecture and finishes of marble, wooden flooring and polished coatings; plus hand-carved cabinetry.

Armani said: 'In essence a house should not overwhelm the person living in it. The house must be lived'. Following this maxim, this apartment and its surroundings are deferential. Arlene Rottanburg explains: 'I didn't use any exceptional paintings or sophisticated artworks. I wanted a place where one

these pages: The entire kitchen can be concealed by large sliding doors. When open they reveal a state-of-the-art culinary interior featuring smoked glass, concealed lighting, Miele appliances, an automated Italian coffee machine and an ice machine.



could walk barefoot in the summer and sit by a good fire in the winter.' The gas fireplace, designed to fit into a floating slab of sandstone, fulfils this prerequisite.

Says architect Aurelio Cimato: 'Two years ago, this very old apartment in Clifton was virtually a flat from the last century. It had giant columns and large down-stand beams obscuring the view, and old windows and doors. On the upside the views are magnificent and the garden is something that one rarely finds in Clifton. The brief was to gut the apartment almost to total demolition, and begin afresh.'

Adds architect Jenny Mills: 'The interior was extremely small but, when combined with the garden and pool area, it becomes an easily usable space and offers wonderful opportunities for creative input.'

Designer Arlene Rottanburg summarises: 'We wanted to achieve a makeover, which would be more about self-expression and relaxation.'

With the aid of a structural engineer and architect Jenny Mills, the final solution involved propping up the entire building, taking out insurance and obtaining Body Corporate approval to proceed with the project. Imported steel girders replaced the down-stand beams and helped create far wider openings. The end result is a clean, bright open space with enviable views.

The designer chose furniture with big volumes, whose weight alone grounds the spaces, each mass almost a complete environment in itself. Whilst she domesticated the internal architecture with plain wood and natural materials, the furniture was sized accordingly and the architecture and furniture marry as near equals, using a palette of colours and materials that minimised contrasts, while maintaining a discrete differentiation. Everything is upholstered in natural hues, in materials whose uniformity ties the rooms together and visually expands the small spaces.

The natural wooden floor of wide beech-wood planks blends with the putty fabrics of the furniture and the dining ►



previous page: The main bedroom is reminiscent of a small hotel suite and is partitioned from the living area via large sliding painted doors with a trellis pattern.



table; as well as the Philippe Starck Louis Ghost chairs, which in turn complement the polished coatings on the walls. The few lamps that are used qualify as furniture and were handmade to resemble anemones, in themselves they formulate a structure; little artwork was used. The lounge area is completed by a large white fibre-design shaggy rug and an organic coco-bead and glass coffee table of the eco genre.

The entire frontage of the apartment consists of stackable floor-to-ceiling glass doors which, when retracted, create a wide open space leading onto a patio made of large slabs of white marble set out in a random pattern. The balustrading is of toughened glass, both on the patio and in the swimming pool area, and allows unimpeded views.

Lighting and ceiling design is a key feature. 'It's the easiest way to transform a space and create a change of mood', says Arlene Rottanburg. All ceiling coves have concealed lighting and the clear glass balustrading is lit from below with LED lights to provide illumination to the pool and patio areas by night. Concealed lighting in all the cabinetry adds to the atmosphere.

This is an apartment in which the seamless integration of the parts builds into a harmony of the whole. Its appeal lies in the atmosphere created by balancing the architecture and furniture in a well-tempered environment. ■