

REAL

ESTATE

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MOVING FORWARD

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MODERN PHYSICS

ALTHOUGH CLEVERLY DESIGNED TO ACCOMMODATE A 21ST-CENTURY LIFESTYLE, THIS DYNAMIC HOME REMAINS TRUE TO THE ARCHITECTURAL ROOTS OF ITS LOCATION

Text: Jocelyn Warrington. Photographs: Adam Letch.



Having holidayed together in a private boutique resort villa in the Caribbean, the owners of this unique Franschhoek home envisioned a similar style of living arrangement for their extended family of three generations,' says Pete Jordan, whose company, Property Development Projects, was assigned the role of client-agent for the job, responsible for the planning and implementation of the entire build. He describes his clients as a family of globetrotters - an Englishman, his three adult children and his grandchildren - who have a particular fondness for the Cape. 'They are a tight-knit unit who enjoy time spent together but still require a degree of privacy,' says Pete.

The inspired architectural solution, arrived at by Richard Townsend of Townsend & Associates Architects (TAARCH), in collaboration with SAOTA - Stefan Antoni Olmesdahl Truén Architects, includes a spacious central communal living area off which radiates a series of individual 'pods'. 'In essence, it's a modern interpretation of the Cape winelands vernacular,' explains Richard. 'The arrangement of the barn-like jonkmanshuise in an H-shaped configuration around the main "house" calls to mind the layout of the werv buildings clustered around a manor house on traditional Cape Dutch farms.'

Each elegantly gabled rectangular 'pod' - there are four, including a luxurious master bedroom wing - comprises two king-size bedroom suites, complete with granite-clad fireplaces, private living rooms and dressing areas and covered terraces. lofty 3.5m-high ceilings and floor-to-ceiling frameless glass sliding doors throughout offer mesmerising views of mountain and

vineyard - the archetypal scenery for which the Franschhoek Valley is so revered.

Glass-fronted covered walkways - perfect gallery spaces in their own right for the owners' extensive collection of local art - link the various buildings, as do numerous outdoor courtyards with covered terraces, each crowned with a sculptural cantilevered *afriak*. These, together with the pitched roofs, flush gables and oversized chimneys of the living quarters, establish a dramatic interplay between horizontal and vertical elements. Yet, despite its components' overt linearity, the house sits as an unobtrusive unit in its natural setting, its lines following the natural contours of the landscape.

Open plan and configured over a number of split-levels, the interior is accessed via an impressive double-volume entrance hall, with the communal living- and dining-room space beckoning beyond. Twenty metres in length - 8m at its highest point - this cavernous room with its roof of exposed timber rafters bookended by a pair of glazed gables, each framing rugged alpine views, was a feat of engineering wizardry, recalls Pete. 'Conceived by Richard and engineered by Sutherlands and Roof Tech, the countless crisscrossing pine rafters that lend the room its cathedral-like air are held in place by a complex steel frame that is entirely concealed in the roof,' he explains.

Of course, dressing such a vast space is no small task, as Audrey Jordan of Decorating Solutions discovered. 'Despite its size, we still wanted the room to feel homely and comfortable,' she says, explaining how organic shapes and the layering of natural textures helped achieve the desired effect.

A massive 20-seater dining room table - custom-designed by Pierre Cronje to fit seamlessly with the terrace and breakfast room tables - is the focal piece of the living area.

'In fact, because the home is frequently filled with friends and guests, many of the furnishings were designed to be modular and multipurpose,' says Audrey. 'Even the sofas in the bedrooms can be extended to do double duty as beds.'

'Essentially, there was not one but four clients on this project, all with their own particular tastes and preferences,' she continues. 'The challenge was to stamp each owner's private quarters with a sense of his or her personality, while ensuring the scheme flowed harmoniously from one room to the next.'

In a sense, then, adds Pete, the home's interior styling takes its cue from its architectural treatment. 'The layout of the property was dictated by the need to accommodate a variety of social arrangements within a single building envelope,' he says. 'The result is a dynamic, multifunctional home entirely relevant to the way it's intended to be lived in.'

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OPPOSITE The east courtyard features a tranquil reflection pond bordered by the glass-fronted walkways that connect the home's various living areas. Portraitist Floris van Zyl's striking "Passport" is visible in the walkway to the left. THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The house features nine fireplaces, all supplied by Italcotta (italcotta.co.za) and clad in granite from Womsg (womsg.co.za); a 3m wall of glass in the master bathroom blurs the line between indoors and out - all sanitaryware was sourced from Exquisite Bathrooms (exb.co.za); with its various 'pods' emanating from a central communal area, the house is a modern interpretation of the layout of traditional Cape Dutch farmsteads; understated yet elegant in shades of pistachio and grey, the colour scheme of this bedroom, one of eight master suites, echoes the natural hues of the landscape seen through its vast glass doors





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT The 16m-long swimming pool is overlooked by a trio of cantilevered terraces, this one boasting an outdoor living and dining area; a 20-seater dining room table from Pierce Croft (pierceroft.co.za) commands pride of place in the communal living area, which features a striking open-rafter ceiling with glass-inset gables and an extra-long rug that was custom-made by Gonsenhausers (fleurigs.co.za) to fill the generously sized floor space; pitched roofs, flush gables and oversized chimneys lend cohesiveness to the home's various inter-leading structures



ARCHITECT Q&A

Richard Townsend of Townsend & Associates Architects shares insights into this unique wineyards project.

Q: TELL US ABOUT THE HOME'S LOCATION AND SITE.

A: It's really this showpiece home of the Franschhoek Estate (the co.za), which comprises eighteen 4 000m² wards between vineyards, olive orchards and swathes of fynbos. The property is located on an elevated site in the centre of the estate and commands views of the surrounding mountains on three sides and, to the north, down the valley and over the village.

Q: DESCRIBE THE LOGISTICAL CHALLENGES.

A: Because the house is situated on the banks of a 160m-long dam, it fell in a natural catchment area, and a complex system of above-gabion walls, agricultural drains and catch pits had to be

engineered to stem the flow of both surface and underground water.

Q: WHAT ABOUT GREEN CREDENTIALS?

A: Sustainability was a key consideration, both in the architectural elements and in the choice of materials. The walls feature thermal cavities, and the metal roofs are double insulated. All of the north-facing glazed areas have deep shading terraces and sliding timber shutters. The buildings are arranged around three water features with sliding glass doors onto these courtyard areas, which allows the prevailing winds to blow cool breezes through the interior. There are six solar water-heating systems, one to each bedroom pod and one each to the kitchen/service wing and the guest cottage. Irrigation for the garden comes courtesy of the estate's private natural mountain-water resource. Townsend & Associates Architects, taarch.com



IN THE ZONE

Scenic beauty, a country lifestyle and proximity to Cape Town all add to

Franschhoek's desirability, which has only increased with property buyers over the last few years. Founded almost 400 years ago by the French Huguenots, who planted the first vines in the valley, Franschhoek is a vibrant, cosmopolitan town that attracts artists, tourists, retirees and affluent people both locally and from abroad. The majority of properties (57%) are bought freehold, but estates and residential developments are fast becoming popular and command 30% of the market share. Most buyers still fall into the middle-aged-to-mature bracket (66%), with under-35s making up only 4% of the market, but a large number – over 32% – have only owned their properties for less than five years. The average price of a freehold property stands at R3,013 million.

Statistics for January to December 2014, source: lightstone.co.za