

Simple Elegance

Tucked among the trees in a leafy suburb,
this family home embraces space, texture and
understated sophistication

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Personalisation is one of the biggest trends right now. A home space should reflect the owner's personality with quirky touches and unusual objects. The metal and mirror bar with oak shelves seen here was designed by Simone Katherine Interiors, as were the sectional couch. The figurine on the bar shelving is by Lindelani Ngwenya.



Neutrals are still very much here to stay, but the grey-on-grey trend is becoming less popular. Instead, mixing whites, greys and other neutrals makes for a clean backdrop for statement colours and patterns.

Heading into 2021, minimalism is the name of the game and the more that can be hidden or packed away, the better. In the kitchen, storage and refrigerators are concealed behind integrated cupboard fronts.

The bar area also includes a whitewashed oak drawer that slides out to reveal a mixing deck on which Simone's husband enjoys DJing.



My projects tell a story, says homeowner and interior designer Simone Hirsch. She's sitting on the spacious veranda of the house she recently renovated for her family in Bishopscourt, Cape Town. The story of the home has unfolded over several years following the young family's move and their renovation of this house, in which they had lived for two years before starting the remodelling project.

Like many other homes in the verdant suburb, this one has a name rather than just a street number: it's called Summer Planes, in tribute to the numerous plane trees that grace the property's large garden. Stories abound at Summer Planes and the most recent chapter of its long history is a very happy one. Together with Johannesburg-based architect Peter Cohen, Simone has brought the existing house – built in classical Cape style – into the 21st century in a way that emphasises all the best aspects of this genre of architecture.

The existing house, explains Simone, was quite substantially different from the way it now looks: it had a rather incongruous circular entrance hall, "plenty of 90s-style lime green" and terracotta tiled floors. The 14-month renovation removed all these elements – the now square entrance hall is a much better fit with the rest of the building – and an extra wing was added to one end of the house. The latter contains both outdoor and indoor living spaces on the ground floor, as well as a new master bedroom suite on the first floor, which has the feel of a contemporary tree house due to its careful placement in the midst of the trees (all of which were carefully preserved during the build).





The main bedroom is a beautifully designed boudoir that is also a glass box that feels as if it is suspended in the surrounding plane trees. Simone Katherine Interiors designed the four-poster bed, the bedside pedestals and the bench at the foot of the bed, which is upholstered in Miroir by Pierre Frey.

Plane trees are popular choices in suburban gardens and on pavements because they have good tolerance for atmospheric pollution. Their leaves turn a beautiful golden colour in autumn and their iconic seed pods hang like natural ornaments in winter. In spring and summer they produce a vibrant green canopy that casts abundant shade.

A nautical theme pulls the decor in Connor's bedroom together: The model boats were found at a stall in Cape Town's Hout Bay Craft Market and the embroidered initial scatter cushions are from African Sketchbook.

"The space around things is key," says Simone. "I love beautiful things but there must never be too many of them," in a room, she adds, referencing the well-known Coco Chanel dictum that everyone should "look in the mirror and take one thing off" before leaving the house. The Chanel reference comes as no surprise given that Simone started out in the fashion industry herself – she trained as a fashion buyer and spent some time in the fashion department at Tatler magazine in London in the early 2000s, where she was fortunate enough to work for the late, legendary fashion editor Isabella Blow. Following this experience, Simone returned to South Africa and started her own fashion business, which taught her "how to deal with colour, feel and texture," she says.

Asked to describe her style, she suggests "simple sophistication" as the best way to sum up her use of clean, contemporary furnishings as well as natural materials and textures – think stone, marble, wood and sandstone – in her interiors. Special touches such as the silk fabric used for curtaining in the main bedroom add a considered note of luxury to this house here and there, and Simone is also skilled in the art of creating playful details. A case in point here is the charming Astroturf putting green she designed for the balcony off her golf-obsessed sons' rooms.

Overall, every design element employed in the house has been chosen with care to suit the needs and wants of all its occupants, and it quite obviously functions perfectly as a family home. No wonder, then, that Simone sums up Summer Planes by smilingly referring to the house as "our happy space".







Useful items can take on a dual decorative purpose, such as piles of books artfully stacked on a bookshelf or firewood arranged to make a sitting area feel warm and inviting.

This outdoor lounge area is situated in the new wing of the house, adjacent to the indoor living area and bar. Simone Katherine Interiors and architect Peter Cohen designed the fireplace surround, with sandstone sourced from a quarry near Pretoria hand-cut to create it. The built-in shelving is backed with glass windows and was manufactured by The Iron Banister and Malco. The flooring is also sandstone, hand-cut to resemble traditional 'klompie' bricks that are a much-used element in traditional Cape design. The hanging light fitting is from Streamlight.

Simone Katherine Interiors designed the square wooden coffee table and the whitewashed oak couch with cushions in an outdoor navy fabric, piped in white, and the cream slip-covered armchairs are from Arteriors.



