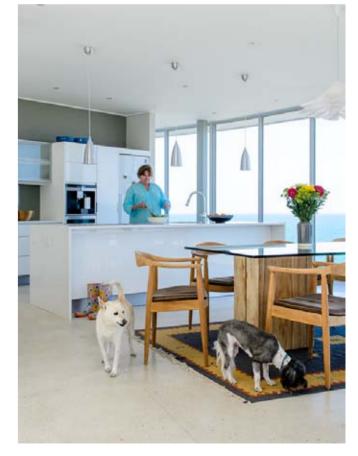


## CONTEMPORARY COASTAL HOME





It's not surprising that the weekend retreat of a Cape Town couple who love the sea and make their living crafting sails for yachts should be positioned almost as close to the crashing waves as it gets, with arresting views over the mercurial ocean.

Yet this is by no means the most extraordinary aspect of this newly built home, designed by acclaimed Joburg architect Sarah Calburn (and for which she won an award at the recent African Property Awards 2012). Located in the holiday village of Betty's Bay, set along the wild, natural southern Cape coastline, the house stands apart from its neighbours. Exhilaratingly contemporary with its interplay of straight and curving lines, and wraparound glass, the structure is a fine example of the architect's work. And yet, so integrated is it with its site that, depending on your vantage point, the building is almost invisible, its fynbos-planted roof forming what the architect calls 'a new horizon', with the house suspended beneath it.

For owners Jan and Belinda Reuvers, whose idea of perfection at their home-away-from-home is solitude and relaxation time, having a coastal hideaway that blended into the environment with its rocky shoreline, craggy mountain backdrop and indigenous fynbos vegetation was a priority - according to Jan's detailed 10-point list that was presented to the architect at their first meeting.

It's no small chance that Sarah was approached to design the Reuvers' Betty's Bay home. When the couple first bought the property, on which the original house had burnt down, leaving an old garage that was converted into a temporary sleeping space. they spent months contemplating the site. 'Every evening we'd sit there with a glass of wine, watching the sea,' says Jan. They would also drive around looking at the houses, and noticed a 'weird' dwelling under construction. By the time it was built, the couple were quite taken with the 'glass box' semi-concealed by fynbos -Sarah's now well-known Fynbos House - and they tracked her down.

Jan's list also dictated factors such as spacious rooms, separate living areas to allow for plenty of personal space and dual vistas. 'I wanted to be able to sit in my chair while watching the rugby, and see the mountain as well as sea views to Hermanus and Hangklip,' he says. And, in addition to 'privacy from their neighbours, and total immersion in this extremely powerful landscape', adds Sarah, 'they wanted a building that was out of the ordinary, and that would deliver what Jan called the "wow factor".'

That the architect famously strives to work in 'the space between landscape and architecture' is vividly evident here. Descending from street level, 'the house spreads forward on an extension of the ground,' explains Sarah. 'As you move towards it, you look down through it at the sea ... before the roof slowly moves over to shelter you and gather you in.' Only once inside do you have the sense that 'you are hovering at least six metres over the ground, which has dropped away sharply beneath you'.

The building's two wings are separated by a glass-rimmed pool and passage decked in untreated massaranduba hardwood, also used in the roof decking; the red tones reflected in the rocks below. As a response to 'the sweep of the sea', the design on one side is characterised by its graceful curve, revealing more and more of the breathtaking panorama as you move through the house, says Sarah.

For its occupants, one of the best things about the property is how it opens up entirely, the floor-to-ceiling glass panels stacking to the sides to create a flow with the outdoors. 'You have the feeling of being outside while still sheltered,' says Jan. Whether seated on floor cushions gazing out at the whales just metres away from the rocks, or gently swinging in Belinda's favourite wicker pod watching the shift of the tides, the couple are clearly in their element.

Sarah Calburn Architects, 011-447-0867, sarahcalburn.co.za



