

AT WATER'S EDGE

With knockout views of sea and mountain, and delightfully private, this architectural wonder in Betty's Bay is the ultimate weekend retreat

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The Betty's Bay retreat of Cape Town-based Jan and Belinda Reuvers was designed by Sarah Calburn Architects to be integrated into its environment, and to maximise the sea and mountain views. The building contractor was Hu-Art Cape Province CC (028-271-4630), based in Kleinmond. Depending on the weather, the frameless folding stacking glass doors by Cover Frameless Glass (coverfg.co.za) can be opened up entirely, creating a flow between inside and out. The wicker sofa, hanging pod and table are all from Weylandts (weylandts.co.za).

The untreated massaranduba hardwood decking by Bespoke Joinery (bespokejoinery.co.za) echoes the use of the same timber in the roof decking that links the two sides of the house. OPPOSITE, FROM TOP A private boardwalk traverses the planted roof and weaves between the fynbos down to the rocks; Belinda prepares lunch in the kitchen-dining area. The dining table and chairs are from Weylandts.



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. □

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BELINDA AND JAN'S HOME TRUTHS

The best thing about summer is the long evenings, and not having to go home in the dark after work (Belinda); walks on the beach, spotting whales and birdlife (Jan). **What I love most about our beach house** is that you can take in the mountain and sea views at the same time (Jan); the sound of the waves crashing on the rocks, the peacefulness, the black nights and watching the fynbos garden grow (Belinda). **The first thing I do when we arrive** is pour Belinda a gin and tonic, and get the braai going (Jan); breathe, have my G&T and relax (Belinda). **The style in which we've decorated** is modern, casual, with some wood to add warmth (Jan). **When it comes to beach houses furniture must be** simple, comfortable, and easy to keep clean. You don't want to spend your down-time slaving away (Jan); simple and light (Belinda). **In doing the research for this home** I must have bought 60 odd books on beach houses, and I'm an avid *Grand Designs* watcher! (Jan) **My summer essentials are** sunscreen, water – as in sea or pool – and wine (Belinda). **I could never live without** books and magazines (Jan); books, family, and our 'pack' of dogs: Sparky, Zama, Snowy and Bella (Belinda). **My favourite way to spend down-time** is reading, and enjoying good food and good wine – and dog time. (Jan); reading, cooking and gardening (Belinda). **My most inspiring place** is Betty's Bay, in my pod, watching the sea (Belinda); Barcelona, Spain, for the architecture and food (Jan).



The glass-rimmed pool divides the two sides of the house, set between the living room and study-library. Glass balustrades by BB Glass and Aluminium (bbglass.co.za) allow for uninterrupted views. The roof and curvilinear garden terraces are planted with indigenous coastal fynbos. The landscaping was done by Bernard Heydenrych of Naturescapes (078-815-5708). **OPPOSITE** Simply decorated and perfectly serene, the focus is on the ever-changing ocean in the master bedroom suite.



The terraced garden and staircase leading to the entrance. OPPOSITE The off-shutter concrete columns that support the structure will eventually be concealed once the fynbos and recently planted trees have grown. 'We're going to have a forest here one day,' notes Belinda.

