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# *the ripple effect*

A CLIFTON HOME CELEBRATES  
CURVES ON A BIG SCALE  
THROUGH A DYNAMIC BLEND OF  
MODERNIST AND AFRICAN IDEALS

The segmented shelving unit hugs the curved wall of the dining/piano room and displays selected ceramics. Simple sun-drenched cream chaises overlook the view

Interior designer Andrea Graff chose pieces with an organic African feel that would create an easy informal elegance in the statement space. The riempie footstools from Pierre Cronje and white-painted Weylandts ottoman contrast with the contemporary side tables by James B Hannah, all underpinned by a coir rug

*'There are very few walls so I sourced sculptures and ceramics that would create a fantastic freestanding visual element' Andrea Graff*



**a**rt and architecture are two sides of the same coin – the three-dimensional expression of line and form. It wasn't a huge leap then that architecture firm DV8 Architects, tasked with renovating this Clifton house, drew on art for inspiration. The source? South African artist Alexis Preller, preeminent in the early 20th century, whose style can best be described as modernism within an African frame of reference. In implementing this design vision, the challenge lay in tying the bottom two floors, both untouched in the previous phase of work, to the top floor, thereby voiding the nagging disjointedness. DV8 Architects' answer to this dilemma was to make the bottom floors feel bigger, and create a stronger link with the outdoor areas. As they were working within an existing footprint, however, these changes had to be done without altering the structure.

Preller's influence on the project was multipronged. The firm honed in especially on his unique grasp of the African form, but it was also his focus on purpose-driven beauty – a very African ideal and the very definition of form meeting function – that drove the aesthetic. The bar is not just a bar, but an artwork in its own right. And so it goes for the kitchen island, ceilings, wall panelling... The most immediately striking motif is the prominence of curves – everywhere, from wavy bulkheads to rippling glass balustrading and polished wood worked into a show-stopping kitchen island or bathroom vanity. Even the staircase spirals down. This strong interior visual language is mirrored by the exterior – the pool deck follows suit and tapers into an infinity curve – and the structure itself, the lines of the house matching the coastline bend for sinewy bend.

'As a firm, we're interested in creating a sense of movement through lines and planes,' says architect Michael Dennett. In this house movement comes by way of geometric shape as well as these curved organic lines, most drawn from forms found in nature: the cells of an orange were the starting point for a feature wall of shelving in the 'piano'/dining room. A striking wall of pyramid panelling at the bottom of the staircase, faceted ▶



**FROM TOP** A server and assorted objets from Africa Nova epitomise Graff's focus on sculptural local pieces. The black sculpture is by local artist Strijdom van der Merwe and ceramic buck head is by Shirley Fintz; the master bedroom's lights complement the ceiling mouldings





FROM LEFT The show-stopping kitchen is a masterclass in woodwork; the curved balustrading echoes the undulating coastline. Bamileke stools and sculpture highlight the location; Graff's decor choices are congruent with the house's finishes. A Pierre Cronje table displays statuesque vessels from OKHA

## Architects' Insight



**Michael Dennett**  
of DV8 Architects

**Q:** Which South African artist's work are you lusting after?  
**A:** We're doing a project with Angus Taylor integrating architecture and sculpture. His insight into materiality is fantastic.

**Q:** What are your ideal beach destinations?

**A:** For an idyllic laid-back experience, Paradise Beach in Jeffreys Bay. For something a bit more unusual, the Red Beach in Santorini.

**Q:** What are your key design elements for beach living?

**A:** A seamless flow of inside and outside with generous spaces for observing, relaxing and celebrating.

**Q:** How do you define luxury by the beach?

**A:** Lazing on a Paola Lenti 'Float' chair while drinking a good bottle of South African wine.

## Designer's Insight



**Andrea Graff** of  
**Andrea Graff Interiors**

**Q:** Which South African artist's work are you lusting after?

**A:** Cameron Platter and Jodi Bieber.

**Q:** What are your key design elements for beach living?

**A:** All interior and exterior finishes should

'age gracefully' within the elements. Soft furnishings – a sofa in de Le Cuona linen with down-filled cushions.

**Q:** What are your ideal beach destinations?

**A:** Mykonos and Cape Town.

**Q:** What makes SA coastal living unique?

**A:** The accessibility to such varied landscapes, fauna and flora, and all the space around you.

**Q:** How do you define luxury by the beach?

**A:** Sitting on a deck with loved ones, watching the sunset.





FROM TOP The 'pod' bathroom downstairs maximises space in a child's bedroom; the magnificent view from the house



bathroom mirrors and checkered padding in the children's playroom all help to layer the space and create the dynamism Dennett was after.

Designer Andrea Graff's interior plan involved creating a scheme that would complement the existing statement structure – the idea was not to detract from it but at the same time to create a cohesion between the structure and the spaces. Embracing the curves in a big way, she chose pieces that would sit comfortably and harmoniously in the highly sculptural space, either through mirroring the shapes around them or highlighting them through their pulled-back simplicity.

'When I first saw the house I knew I had to find ways to make sure it didn't come off as intimidating,' she explains. And so she devised an interior scheme where earthy elemental African-ness offsets the severe aspects of the structure and simultaneously plays up to the soul of the original Preller reference. Artworks, appropriately, play a big role in the aesthetic. 'There are very few walls so I sourced sculptures and ceramics that would create a fantastic freestanding visual element,' she explains.

The middle level – the heart of the home, in a physical as well as a symbolic sense – is cosier and closer than the top, with warm wood details echoing the intimacy of the space. The wood-strip ceiling continues the tone set on the floor above with strong lines and an ever forward-looking trajectory.

Down below, and more compact still, the children's bedrooms are a triumph of clever space management. DV8 Architects' answers to the space issue included streamlined solutions like a bed and study unit combined, or the retro-inspired pod-like en suite which is, oddly, also space age. A third children's bedroom leads outside, connected to the pool terrace by a wall of water.

The terrace is a symphony of swirls and straight lines – the pool, which is fed by a long narrow channel, ends in a sunken circular seating area surrounded by sloping panelled wooden walls. The use of water is key in expressing the core ideals of the house – natural, organic and moving. Dennett explains that 'by adding motion, the space moves away from something that is static and the journey through it becomes more exciting and memorable'.

■ Andrea Graff  
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*'As a firm, we're very interested in creating a sense of movement through lines and planes'*  
 Michael Dennett

Loungers line up against the gently sloping boundary wall which is an extension of the decking. A sunken and shaded seating area is the ideal outdoor dining space