



french accent

RELOCATING FROM BRUSSELS TO CAPE TOWN, ONE FAMILY SET OUT TO CREATE A HOME THAT REFLECTED THEIR BRIGHT, NEW SURROUNDS

TEXT DOMINIQUE HERMAN PHOTOGRAPHS GREG COX



The Emperor marble dining-room table is paired with antique 'Swan' chairs from Strauss & Co, upholstered in 'Bertrand' fabric from Romo South Africa
OPPOSITE PAGE Rowley & Hughes fitted carpeting matches an India Mahdavi table in the living room

PRODUCTION: SVEN ALBERDING/BUREAUX



A kilim from Mae Artisan Rugs and a James B Hannah sculpture in the passage leading to the kitchen OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP Glamour in the guest bathroom takes the form of a gold basin from Liebermann Pottery and Ralph Lauren black grass cloth on the walls; custom marble tiles 'carpet' the floor around the kitchen island and feature on the splashback

'I love colour – there's always colour. There are always things that don't match, but somehow do match'
Andrea Graff

fter looking at a number of palatial South African houses featuring multiple living rooms and kitchens, a French family of six happened, aptly, on a Provençal-styled home. Not only did it have a European-type layout and the requisite number of living rooms and kitchens (thankfully, one of each), it was near the schools in which the parents planned to enroll their children. And when you have four children at three schools, proximity is crucial.

'It was a very big decision,' says the homeowner of her husband's plan to sell his company and transplant them and their children. 'We didn't want to make a mistake.'

On a subsequent whirlwind trip to Cape Town, they met the builder and interior designer and then jetted back to Brussels (where they were living at the time). And, apart from one more trip at the start of the revamp and a check-up three months later, they proceeded to do the four-month decorating job via calls, weekly Skype sessions and emails.

The French couple found the interior designer, Andrea Graff, via an online search and, after the initial conversation, knew she would be perfect for the job. Andrea is one of South Africa's top designers, known for her irreverent colour, texture and graphic pattern mash-ups.

'We had four months to totally strip this home and redo seven bathrooms as well as the entire interior of the home,' says Andrea. 'Everything was planned meticulously beforehand and we had the most unbelievable builder, Paul Wolpert.'

The time restriction was mitigated by an instant rapport between the owners and Andrea in a job she describes as 'a total joint venture'.

'She's possibly been the client that I've wished for my entire career,' Andrea says. 'She just *got* me. We did so many daring things. It was a dream come true.'

The couple, whose last house was a study in white, grey and black, wanted 'an easy living house' – one that was practical for a large family. Although this was the fifth house they had revamped, including one in the bush in Limpopo, it was the first in Cape Town. 'It was the first time that we had a home in such a sunny place, so we wanted a bright house, a fun house. We chose Andy because we wanted colourful things and she is colourful,' says the husband. ▶





The main en-suite bathroom in Rosa Norwegian marble
 OPPOSITE PAGE,
 CLOCKWISE FROM TOP
 LEFT All the upstairs bedrooms are wall-to-wall carpeted in the same custom Rowley & Hughes zebra print; the gracious exterior of the house; an antique Indian carved wooden display unit; Happy, the family dog, relaxes on a vintage rocking chair



'It's about mixing and layering, and not making it obvious and predictable'



The headboard in the guest bedroom is upholstered in Designers Guild Christian Lacroix 'Soft Jardin Exo'Chic' fabric from Home Fabrics OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP Interior designer Andrea Graff; the sofa was reupholstered in Mark Alexander 'Empire' fabric from Romo South Africa

There are teal-blue walls and carpets in the living area, bright yellow walls in the guest room, lime-green walls in the boys' bathroom, and a variety of black and white fabrics and tiles creating a kaleidoscope of pattern and animal print.

'There is a continuity,' Andrea says. 'I love colour – there's always colour. There are always things that don't match, but somehow do match. It's about mixing and layering, and not making it obvious and predictable.'

The owners wanted to bring all of their furniture and art from Europe. These pieces were supplemented with local art and fabrics plus finds from Andrea's stock of vintage and auction buys.

'In South Africa our standard of upholstery and craftsmanship, and our selection of fitted furniture is completely on par with international standards, if not better,' says Andrea. 'But to find the bamboo sideboard or the Lalique lamp or the old Maison Jansen table, that is difficult. We don't have it here, and if the odd person brings it in, it gets snapped up, so for me the opportunity to source and find things was just amazing.'

Conversely, the homeowner made a South African find in Paris: at the India Mahdavi shop she discovered an Ardmore Ceramic Art piece. 'It's beautiful, this thing, and I turned it over and it said "South Africa".'

Some design elements were matched to personal items: the black and white Fauteuil-style chairs in the living room were lacquered and reupholstered in a Diane von Furstenberg-type dress print similar to the ones in the owner's wardrobe. In the younger daughter's bedroom, the walls were matched to the colour of one of her mother's handbags.

Originally from the north of France, the couple had regularly visited Cape Town on holiday for 20 years. Having lived in England, Spain, Asia, the United States and, most recently, Belgium for seven years, they wanted to give their four children the same international experience they'd had.

'Paris is a beautiful city but we have never lived in a beautiful country,' says the homeowner. 'South Africa is such a country. Everything here is so lovely.'

■ **Andrea Graff Interior Design**
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