

BOUTIQUE BOUDOIR: *Get a hotel-inspired bedroom with our style steals*

# home



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THIS TOP  
TREND**

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VALENTINE'S  
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# INTERIOR *of nic*

INSPIRING HOMES BURSTING WITH  
CHARACTER AND ELEGANCE

# MOUNTAIN HIGH



*Perched on the edge of Table Mountain National Park in picturesque Camps Bay, this recently renovated house blends a restrained contemporary design with wonderfully tactile materials*

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**“We didn’t want to cut into nature more than had already been done”**



**S**andwiched between its world-renowned beach and the side of Table Mountain, Cape Town’s Camps Bay must surely be high on any list of the loveliest places to live in the world. So it’s no surprise that Niki and Sebastian Prinz fell comprehensively in love with this property in 2009, when they impulsively purchased what Sebastian describes as “an old rundown house built in 1984” in spite of the fact that at the time, they were about to start building a home elsewhere in the Cape.

What is especially remarkable about the Prinzes’ property is that it has not just one, but two pristine views. There’s the panoramic vista out onto the Atlantic Ocean at the front – with superlative sunset views – plus a gloriously wild and mountainous outlook from the rear of the house, which backs directly onto Table Mountain National Park. Showing a sensitivity to their surroundings that is not always shared by those who build or renovate in this beautiful part of the world, Niki and Sebastian have created a home that blends beautifully into this landscape, rather than aggressively trying to wrest one’s attention away from it.

Having lived in the original house for four years before they embarked on a renovation project that began in 2013 and was completed a year later, the couple knew the ins and outs of their property very well indeed. They kept the basic footprint of the structure intact – “We didn’t want to cut into nature more than had already been done,” says Niki. She adds that “We’ve always wanted to design and build our own house,” and says that the renovation has

Far left: Perhaps the most eye-catching element of the façade of the house is the pergola, which is made from oiled sugar-gum wood. The decking is made from the same wood, but has been left to weather and age naturally. Above: The exterior deck is more like an outdoor room than a conventional veranda, since the sliding wooden shutters can be used to screen it from the elements or even fully (and securely) enclose it as needed. In the open-plan main bedroom suite, the warmth of the wooden finishes and fixtures combines with a high ceiling (and a total lack of clutter) to truly tranquil effect.

Clockwise: In the inviting, comfortably furnished living area, the striking wooden branched display unit on the wall is by Kitch Inc (www.kitchinc.co.za). The yellow and green cabinet is from Stokperd (www.stokperd.com). The Prinzes' dog Tiga takes some time out in the living room, at the rear of which is a staircase that leads down to directly access the double garage below. A long, narrow window at the rear of the house allows light – as well as a sliver of view of the mountainous 'back yard' – into the living area and stairwell.



turned out even better than she and Sebastian hoped it would. "In part, that's because our builder, Arnold Meiring, was so great, totally on time, on budget and a key contributor to the overall process." They were also working towards the realisation of a striking design by Plettenberg Bay-based architect Tessa van Schaik and her practice, The Planet Thing. With Niki – who has been a project manager for commercial building projects in the past – taking the helm of the project management, the renovation has been nothing short of a complete success.

The Prinzes' brief to their architect included the request that the design should create a feeling of relaxation and holiday, as well as stressing the fact that the couple both enjoy outdoor activities – Sebastian is a dedicated surfer, while

Niki does yoga and meditation – so they wanted both the interior and exterior of the house to reflect this. The Planet Thing's design is an intuitive and sensitive response to this brief, as well as to the constraints and opportunities of the site. The public spaces of the house are now open plan, with raised ceilings and exposed rafters that create an airy, expansive feel within what is actually quite a modestly sized area. Adding to this sense of spaciousness is the fact that it is possible to see right through the house to the mountain at the back and to the sea in the front.

The house also extends itself towards the outdoors in the front via an expansive covered deck area, while to the rear, there is a wall of windows through which the rocky mountain landscape is visible. The





All the wood is treated with natural products: the pergola and shutters, for example, are oiled once a year, while the decking will simply be permitted to weather naturally



Clockwise from left: The dining chairs were custom-made for the house by Vogel (vogeldesign.co.za) and the dining table is by Continuum. The light fitting above the table is by Scotch and Sofa Accessories (www.scotchandsofa.co.za). At the front of the living room, a wide upholstered daybed by Casamento (www.casamento.co.za) is the perfect place to spend lazy winter weekend afternoons. The kitchen joinery was custom-made to homeowner Niki Prinz's design by Kitch Inc (www.kitchinc.co.za).



result is an excellent sense of indoor-outdoor flow, and from a very practical point of view, this sense of openness is tempered by the awareness that a measure of protection from the elements, especially the southeaster and the heat and glare of the summer sun, is also required.

The solution to the latter challenge is a set of movable wood and metal shutters that can be pulled back and forth across the front of the house as required. The shutters can be used to shade and secure the glass-fronted living room, and to enclose and protect the outdoor living area too. Since they can be locked into place, the sliding shutters also provide security.

With regard to materials, the design makes smart use of wood, glass and concrete, with the wood adding a marvellous sense of tactility and character to the house and softening the concrete ceilings. All the timber used for the interior balustrades, wall cladding and shutters was sourced by Sebastian and is an alien tree species called sugar gum that is currently being systematically removed from forests in the Cape. The sculptural wooden pergola on the front of the house is made from the same material, as are all the decks. The external shutters and garage doors are the exception to this rule: the sugar gum proved too heavy for use here, so they are made from larch. All





**The house combines striking good looks with the ability to blend beautifully with the wild and natural landscape in which it is situated**

Above: The bathroom in the main bedroom suite is clad entirely in wood. The standalone oval bath is from Flush Bathrooms (www.flushbathrooms.co.za).

At the back of the house, a small garden planted with indigenous shrubs backs directly onto a section of Table Mountain National Park. As from the front of the house, it is possible to see right through the space to the other side – an aspect of the design that gives the relatively compact living areas a very expansive feel.

Right: In the kitchen, it was Sebastian's idea to create the 'printer's tray' effect with the wood-framed windows.

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Most of the building materials and all interior finishes, furnishings and decor were sourced and selected by Niki and Sebastian. Niki designed her own kitchen using wooden cupboards in iroko, which are cleverly counterpointed by the stainless-steel and concrete counter tops. A strikingly sculptural high bar counter that 'separates' the dining area from the kitchen is made entirely from wood including a very special piece of kiaat.

Some of that same wood was used upstairs, in the master bedroom, to craft an elegant bed and bedside pedestals. And perhaps the most enviable thing in this entirely covetable home is the private balcony that extends from the open-plan, en suite eyrie that is the main bedroom. Two guest bedrooms are situated on the ground floor, as is the cleverly tucked away home office, which is hidden from the living area by a wooden screening 'wall' and enables Niki and Sebastian to comfortably and efficiently work from home when necessary.

The Prinzes' house is a remarkable one: in a place where many homeowners subscribe to the notion that bigger (and flashier) is always better, Niki and Sebastian have deliberately chosen to create a modestly sized, gently hewn gem. Their home's simple yet thoughtful design and tactile, natural finishes give it an earthy, essential beauty, and it exudes an almost tangible sense of warmth and welcome. ■■■

