



# ELEMENTS OF NATURE

The magnificent surroundings of this South African retreat have informed its subtle organic design

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## PROFILE

**THE HOME** Set over three levels, this coastal home has been ingeniously designed to complement the rugged sea and landscape, using a wealth of natural materials that are completely in keeping with the environment. Consideration has also been given to the changing light and weather conditions, so that the home can be enjoyed from every aspect at any time of day or night.

With the verandah doors open, the living space and terrace join seamlessly. Seating areas are positioned strategically around the house, so that the incredible views can be enjoyed from every vantage point.



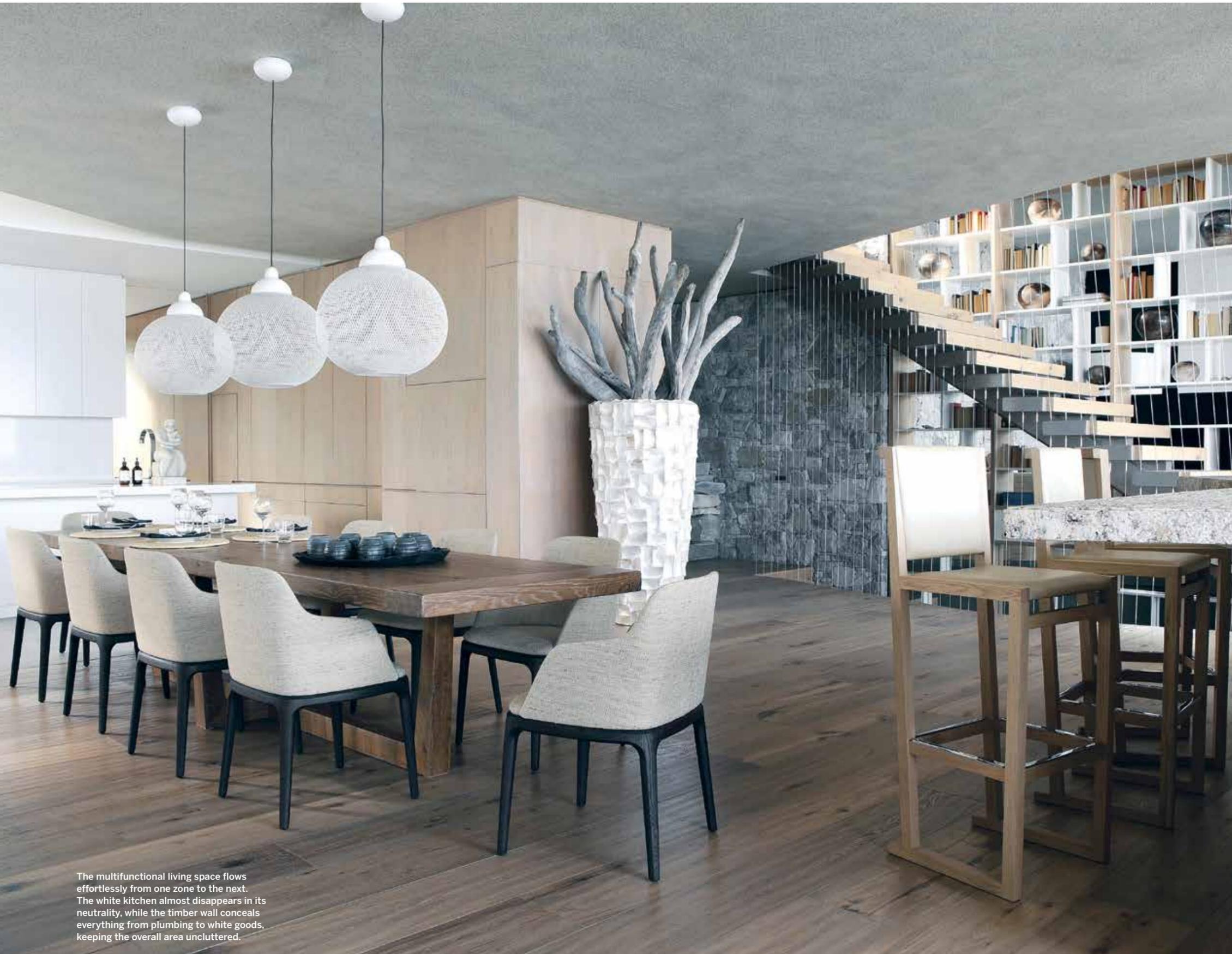
In the small town of Plettenberg Bay on South Africa's spectacular Garden Route, this beachside retreat peeps through the dunes, with breathtaking views of the sea. The property was designed by Philip Fouche of Stefan Antoni Olmesdahl Truen Architects, and the owners of this enviable holiday home called on Paul van den Bergh of Cape Town-based interior design company Cécile and Boyd for the interior planning, design and decoration.

The overall design of the house is ingenious and detailed: the building nestles sensitively in its setting, the stony base connecting it to the earth, while the wood-clad façade blends subtly within the dunes. 'The texture just dissolves into the background so beautifully,' explains Paul. It is designed so that there is always somewhere to relax, with views out or inside when the weather is unpredictable, as it often is on this coastline. 'It's quite a wide plot, so you have an amazing lateral connection to the bay, and there's a wonderful sense of light and space.' The house has three levels, with the main living area opening on to the deck sited in the middle. Above are the bedrooms, while below is a basement cinema room, with another kitchen and an additional guest suite opening out on to the pool.

The core multifunctional space – where the family truly 'live' – incorporates all the disparate functions of an entrance hall, a living room, study, kitchen and dining room, and a bar. It has spectacular views of the sea, and the glass doors all slide completely away into a recess in the wall. 'We love creating spaces where there's more than one reason to go there, and there are so many in this main room,' says Paul. The kitchen is entirely open ▶



**Above left** The cinema area on the basement level is decorated in dark, earthy colours and full of texture; the wall is in raw, locally quarried stone. **This page** In the main living area, the dramatic curved fireplace makes a powerful focal point. The furniture includes custom-made designs, with a predominance of organic shapes and natural materials.



The multifunctional living space flows effortlessly from one zone to the next. The white kitchen almost disappears in its neutrality, while the timber wall conceals everything from plumbing to white goods, keeping the overall area uncluttered.



to the dining area, and a kitchen island has been placed right at the front of this space, close to the views, drawing people forward and, in many ways, forming the heart of the home. 'It acts as an entrance hall table as well as an all-day multi-use sitting area,' says Paul. 'People can sit around it, enjoy casual meals, read the newspapers, or in the evening simply gather to enjoy drinks before dinner.'

When it came to the decor, Paul aimed for casual glamour. 'When the family come here, they go with friends and relatives, and they take their dogs. So it's a full house,' says Paul. 'They wanted feet-up casual comfort and plenty of places to chill out.' To reflect this laid-back feel, the family was quite clear that they wanted natural materials and neutral tones reminiscent of the textures and colours of the dunes and the sea: 'It's what we refer to as extreme textures,' Paul explains. The elemental inspiration shifts from earth to air as each level is ascended. In the basement level, darker colours are much in evidence, while high up in the bedrooms, a sense of light is achieved with a light airy palette.

The central living room is all beiges and sands, using textured and richly layered materials, including hammered stone and ▶



In this low-key bedroom, hand-dyed fabrics in blues and greens pick up on the ocean beyond, creating a restful atmosphere.

**Clockwise from above left** The entrance hall with stone-clad walls under a sculptural staircase makes a dramatic statement as light floods in from above the stairs. Natural materials – from rough stone to slate and wood – have been used to magnificent effect throughout. No two bedrooms are the same, despite sharing a similar palette. A mix of designer pieces and artwork, together with carefully placed artefacts, give every area interest and cohesion.



sea-washed timbers, and fabrics in varying natural tones. Paul brought in molten copper, smooth glass, beaten bronze, matte ceramics, raw rustic and gouged timbers. 'We also wanted to use hand-crafted fabrics, so there are quite a lot of tie-dyed materials and raw silks that have been roughly woven to almost look like fishermen's nets,' he explains.

Downstairs on the basement level, the cinema room is decorated in dark, earthy colours to connect it to the ground and create an almost subterranean feel. Textures are most densely layered here, all the way to the feature stone wall: the floor is terrazzo while the fabric on the sofas is 'knobbly and bark-like'. A charcoal suede curtain helps to screen the area when necessary – 'so you're able to screen yourself off if you've had enough of all that Indian ocean,' laughs Paul.

Upstairs, all five bedrooms have en-suite bathrooms, and no two rooms are the same, even though they all have a light palette.

All are still subtly layered and enriched with texture, but with a loftier ambience than the downstairs areas, delicately drawing in the surroundings. Bathrooms, bedrooms and dressing rooms are not divided by standard walls, either: 'The rooms are all together – the simplicity unites the multifunctional spaces,' says Paul.

The furnishings throughout combine imported signature design pieces, but also bespoke designs by Cécile and Boyd. 'Solid woods were carved into functional pieces, so there are all these organic pieces that are crafted, and then layered with amazing objet,' Paul points out.

The overriding effect of this original and very beautiful home is the way every element has been chosen to pick up on the natural surroundings while avoiding the pitfalls of being too literal or clichéd. It effortlessly demonstrates that a retreat into nature can include raw elements, yet still epitomise comfort, luxury and glamour. ▶



The bathrooms in each suite are divided by custom-made screens, which separate the rooms without compromising on the light and airy feel of the overall space – further emphasised by the floor-to-ceiling doors leading to the glass-fronted balcony. Here again, the extensive use of texture ensures the decor is tactile, organic and interesting.

## STYLE FILE

How to get the look



**Chair** Catch at D-tales, Dh3,399



**Vase**  
West Elm,  
Dh295



**Stool**  
Andrew  
Martin,  
Dh2,574



**Tray**  
Zara Home,  
Dh209



**Kazu dining table**  
Arteriors Home  
at Bloomingdale's  
Home, Dh33,600



**Cushion** West Elm, Dh155