

# NATURAL HARMONY

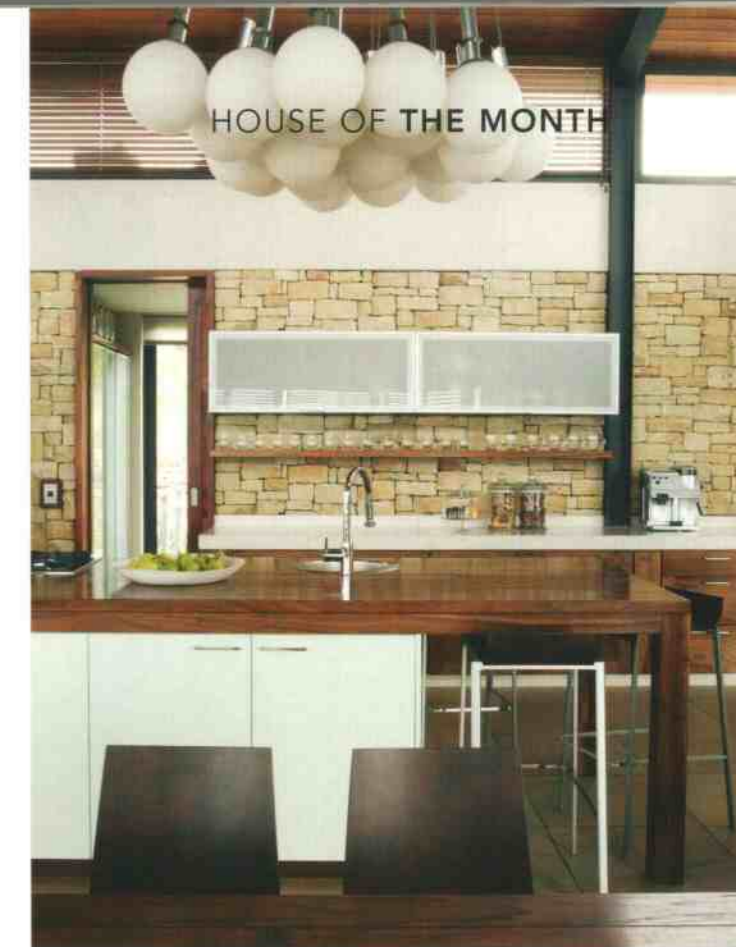
Text Vicki Sleet Production Laureen Rossouw Photographs Martin Hahn

A view over the pool across the fynbos. The loungers are from Marlantek (021-425-3817, marlantek.com). The balau shutters slide closed to provide shade and privacy when desired. The pool was painted a dark colour so that it would blend with the surrounds. In the mornings the sun streams through the windows on this side of the home.

In keeping with its perch on the crest of Knysna's Eastern Head, this contemporary space makes a stylish statement in natural materials and textures



THIS PICTURE The upstairs lounge is filled with tactile nature-inspired furniture. The coffee table was found at Weylandts (086-010-3400, [weylandts.co.za](http://weylandts.co.za)), the orange Neo chairs are from Ligne Roset (011-706-9961/2) and the sofas were sourced from Comfort Creations (011-673-9333, [comfortcreations.co.za](http://comfortcreations.co.za)). TOP RIGHT The stone-clad wall in the kitchen is one of the many textural elements in the home. The light fitting is from Creative Lighting (044-382-3547) in Knysna, the counter tops were made by Stoneform (021-448-6480) and the cupboards by Naron Woods (044-382-6227).



The owners of this clean and lean-lined home, situated on the Pezula Private Estate in Knysna on the Garden Route, have had a long love affair with the area. Their first holiday here was some 18 years ago when Knysna was still a sleepy hollow. Since then they have harboured a desire to put down roots in what has become, over the past two decades, a cosmopolitan hub that hums with life come holiday time and with the comings and goings of its permanent population out of season.

Adjacent to the award-winning Pezula Resort Hotel and Spa, the 615-hectare piece of land has jaw-dropping views of the Indian Ocean and exquisite fynbos-clad vistas from every angle. The estate management's careful planning – 85 per cent of the estate will remain in its natural state – and attention to rehabilitating the natural fynbos have even resulted in the return of small wildlife. It was these obvious drawcards and the mere 10-minute drive into the centre of town (plus a love of golf and being at one with nature) that led the owners to purchase a plot here three years ago. Once they had secured the land, discussions ensued with local architect Steff Mulder of CMAI Architects. The brief was to create a home that was in keeping with the natural surroundings, and that would feel as comfortable for two as it would for 12. Steff opted to build the home just below the plot's ridge line, reducing its visual impact but also sheltering it from the westerly winds that can gust to impressive speeds here. Rather than simply positioning the house to take advantage of the panoramic 160-degree views, says Mulder, the owners chose to place it so that the vistas of the rugged coastline below are also part of the picture. Integrating it within its site has ensured an enviable sense of privacy and seclusion. ▽

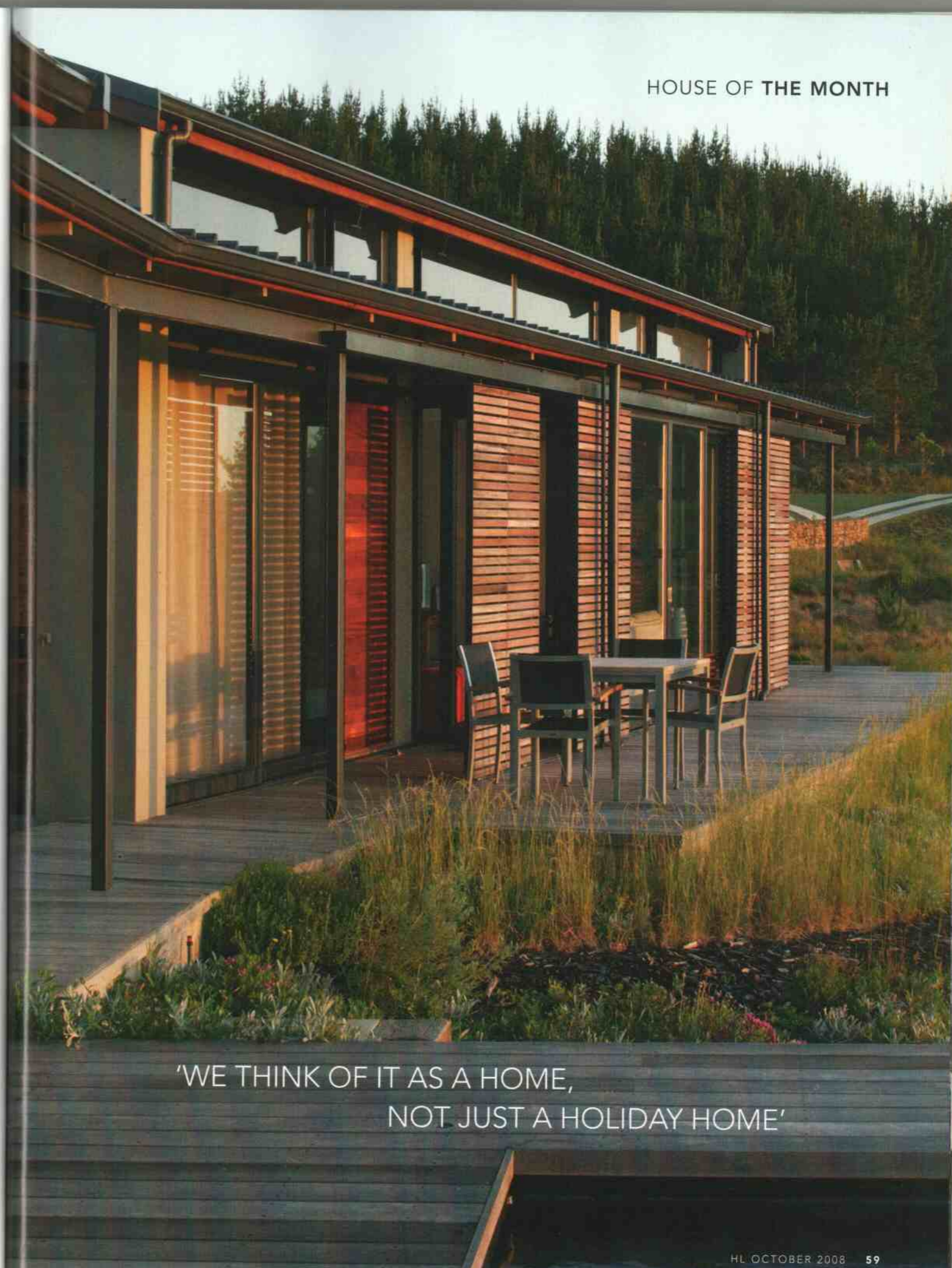
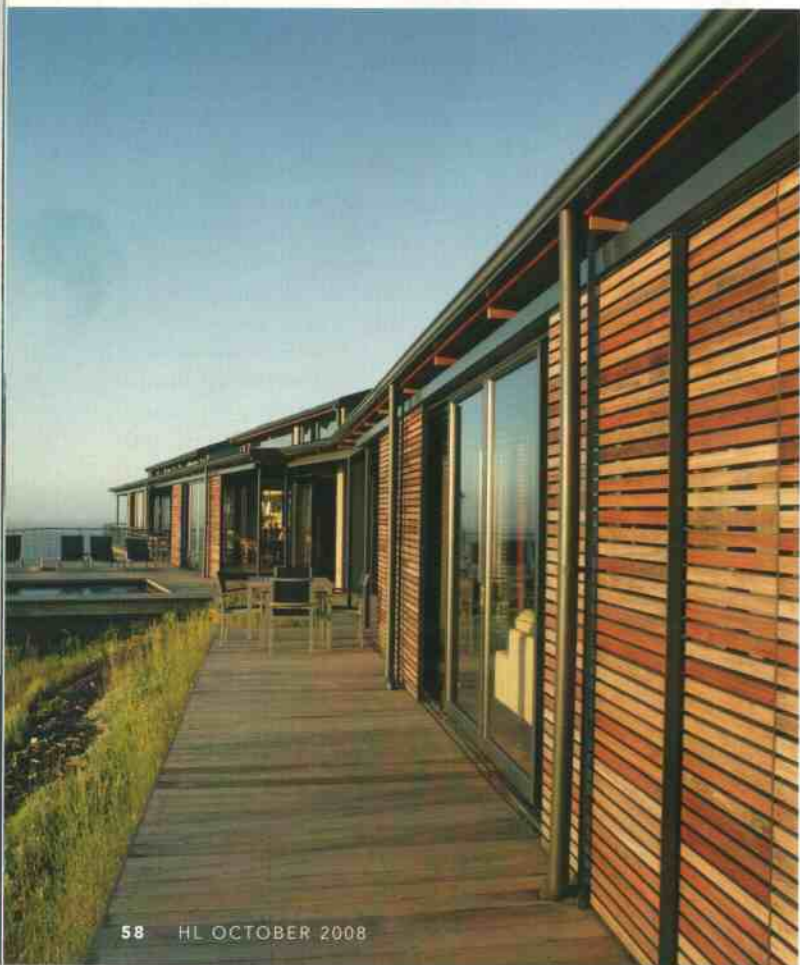


The materials used in the home's construction – a combination of textures such as sandstone, steel, balau wood and glass – were chosen to complement and celebrate the surrounding landscape. It was imperative that the couple, who live in Cape Town and spend up to a week a month (and all holidays) here, didn't feel overwhelmed by the space while visiting *à deux*. The bedroom, lounge, downstairs bar and cosy seating areas on either side of the main kitchen island ensure there are welcoming, intimate spaces for enjoying their downtime together. Once the space fills up with family and friends, the distinct areas happily contain all visitors and allow them to decide on their own favourite places to kick back and relax. Self-confessed braai addicts ('we only ever use the oven for side dishes'), the couple commissioned an outside lapa as part of the design. With its views of the ocean below, there's no doubt that still summer nights here are the stuff of magical holiday memories.

For the interiors, the owners wanted to reflect the design tenets and position of the home as much as possible. Tactile surfaces (from the natural fabrics chosen to driftwood art, white cement counters, rietdakke and dry-pack walls) and a palette of nature-inspired hues (from the aquas of the sky and sea to the greens, greys and dusty browns of the earth) ensure that a sense of harmony with the outside world prevails. Doors that slide back to embrace the outside entertainment areas ensure a seamless flow, while the generous floor-to-ceiling glass windows make certain that the sky and sea are in constant view. As the couple spends so much time here ('We think of it as a home, not just a holiday home'), there is an inordinate attention to detail paid to creature comforts. With a mini spa that houses a sauna, Jacuzzi and Turkish bath, 200 thread-count linen on the beds, a private cellar, excellent lighting and all the kitchen goodies to make a gourmet cook feel right at home, it's no surprise that this space is very well used. Having recently spent their second lengthy holiday in their home-from-home, the couple agrees that their love affair with Knysna looks set to last for a long time to come. ◻

Steff Mulder, CMAI Architects, 044-382-6732

**THIS PAGE, TOP** The accent colour on the dividing wall in the main bedroom is Cherrie Jubilee by Earthcote (086-010-2269, earthcote.co.za). Elements such as the recess in the wall help enhance the pared-down look and feel of the space. **BOTTOM** The view from the self-catering two-bedroomed cottage shows the full expanse of the property, with the Indian Ocean beyond. **OPPOSITE** The patio table and chairs, outside the cottage, are from the Forum range by Marlantek.



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### TIPS FOR LIVING WITH NATURE

**Building know-how.** The owners built their home remotely, visiting the site every few weeks to monitor the progress: 'Building is always a challenge, but we were incredibly lucky to work with a builder who made it a pleasure.' Knysna-based Andrew Hare Builders (044-382-1904) executed the architect's design.

**Light fantastic.** 'The lighting was one of the best investments we made for the house,' say the owners. Though the views of the sea are the hero during the day, at night the natural environment and rock formations are made visible with clever, dramatic lighting. For the interior lighting they worked closely with Lindsay Harrow of Creative Lighting to create mood and ambience, highlighting elements of the space for visual interest.

**Heart of the home.** The couple are consummate entertainers and love sharing their space with family and friends. The kitchen and entertainment zones are areas rich with life and activity. They opted for a generous 2.5-metre kiaat counter top for the central island, while the bright red KitchenAid appliances (not pictured) add a sense of fun and functionality to this well-used space.



### Q+A WITH STEFF MULDER

**How does this house reflect your signature style?** In the way it responds to its context, its ability to expand and the flow from inside to outside.

**Challenges of the site?** Identifying the ideal position to ensure that the house makes the most of the dramatic views of the shoreline and is sheltered against the elements.

**Your favourite element of the house?** The way it is tucked into its surroundings beneath the ridgeline.

**The thinking behind the materials you chose?** The house is light and open to the view while solid where it cuts into the hill. That dictated steel, timber and glass on the one side versus rock and concrete where it meets the earth on the other.

**How does your design take the elements and the seasonal weather into account?** The design is a direct response to the climate – it adapts. From movable shading screens along the east side that shield the home from hot summer mornings, to being able to close up the opposite side when the westerly wind pumps in winter, the owners can enjoy Knysna's climate all year round.



**THIS PAGE** The outdoor lapa is surrounded by fynbos and is filled with beach sand to evoke a seaside atmosphere. The gabion walls were constructed using Free State sandstone. **OPPOSITE, TOP** Despite being situated within an estate, the rim-flow pool has views of nothing but fynbos and the Indian Ocean. **BOTTOM** Large communal showers, easy-to-clean surfaces and hard-wearing materials in the bathrooms are ideal for regular post-beach use.