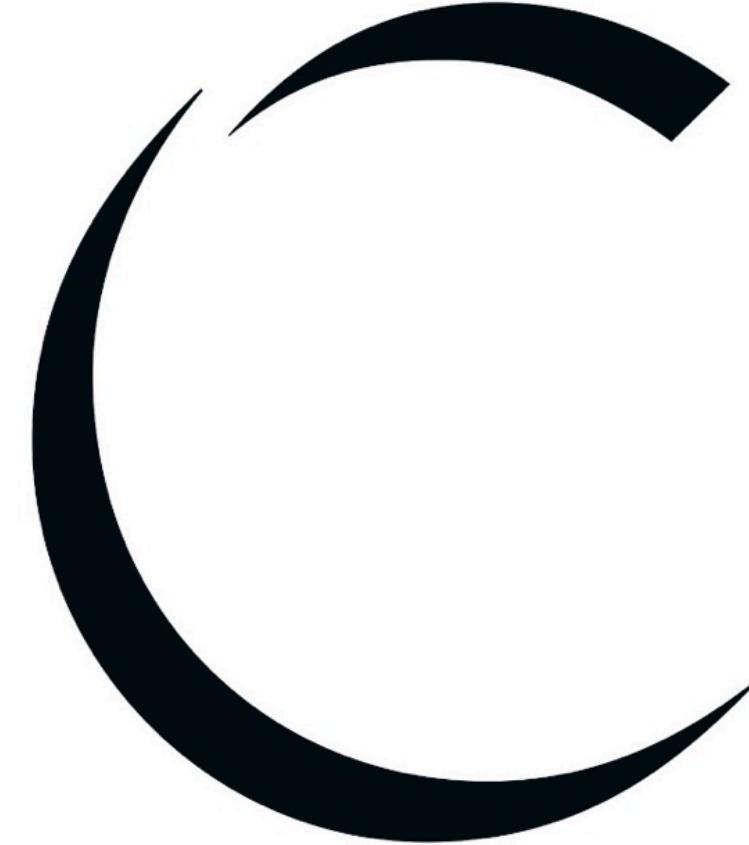




BOTH WORLDS

Wallpaper maven Cara Saven is known for the bold imagination of her designs. It's not surprising, therefore, that she approached the renovation and contemporary extension of her heritage home with the same inspired creativity

WORDS NATALIE BORUKAV
PHOTOGRAPHY KARL ROGERS



Cara and Marvin Saven spent three years searching for the perfect family home. What they eventually found was a small house built in 1927 in dire need of some love – not exactly what they had in mind. ‘The interior was a typically boxed space with a single passage and no regard for light,’ Cara recalls. ‘But it had an intangible allure ... something quite enigmatic and compelling that I put down to the heritage character of the home.’

Looking beyond the dated finishes and cramped footprint, Cara recognised the potential the home offered for renovation. There were other features that held appeal – a handsome veranda-fronted entrance, a large back garden with a grand avocado tree, not to mention the marvellous location. Fresnaye is a vibrant Atlantic Seaboard suburb, conveniently sheltered from the notorious south-easterly wind with access to trails on the slopes of Table Mountain and beautiful stretches of beach along the Atlantic Ocean. For a young family who love the outdoors, the setting was ideal.

The desire for a large, open-plan living space saw the Savens embark on an ambitious two-phase extension and renovation of the home. Phase one involved the design and construction of a north-facing wing to house a new kitchen and elevated living area. The second phase saw the plan of the existing house reworked to accommodate a home office, and the completion of a first storey containing three bedrooms and two bathrooms. Cara – who honed her creative eye as a retail buyer for a large clothing chain and then as a photographer before turning her hand to design – confidently took the helm and enlisted the help of architect Kobus van Schoor.

Provision was made for the first storey by laying an L-shaped, reinforced concrete slab that overhangs the outdoor entertaining area. With aluminium glass sliding doors and painted screed floors to complement, the new build presents a somewhat defiant contemporary aesthetic to the traditional expression of the house. ‘I faced the dilemma of old versus new and, with encouragement from my interior-designer friend Karen Marsden, I decided to



exaggerate the contrast by embracing both in equal measure,’ says Cara, speaking to the surprising harmony of the vivid juxtaposition.

There’s an expansive perspective that meets you when entering that makes it hard to believe that the interior was once a warren of rooms. Within the existing structure – defined by a foundation of refurbished floorboards – walls were removed, and rooms were reassigned. The entrance hall and dining area, for example, were created by absorbing a bedroom. It’s a lofty space enhanced by a pitched truss roof that, Cara reveals, was a serendipitous discovery. ‘The beams were hidden by pressed ceilings, which we removed to have restored. I enjoyed the height that resulted as well as the interest they brought to the space, so we left them exposed.’

The sense of spaciousness in the new wing of the home is amplified by the use of glass, which establishes the exterior as a backdrop while drawing abundant light into the living spaces. ‘When conceptualising the extension, I was very much inspired by the idea of a tent, which could open and close as the weather permits,’ Cara remarks, adding that the result is well-suited to her and Marvin’s



SET UP OUTSIDE
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'Every room has its own canvas of exterior views that changes as the day progresses'



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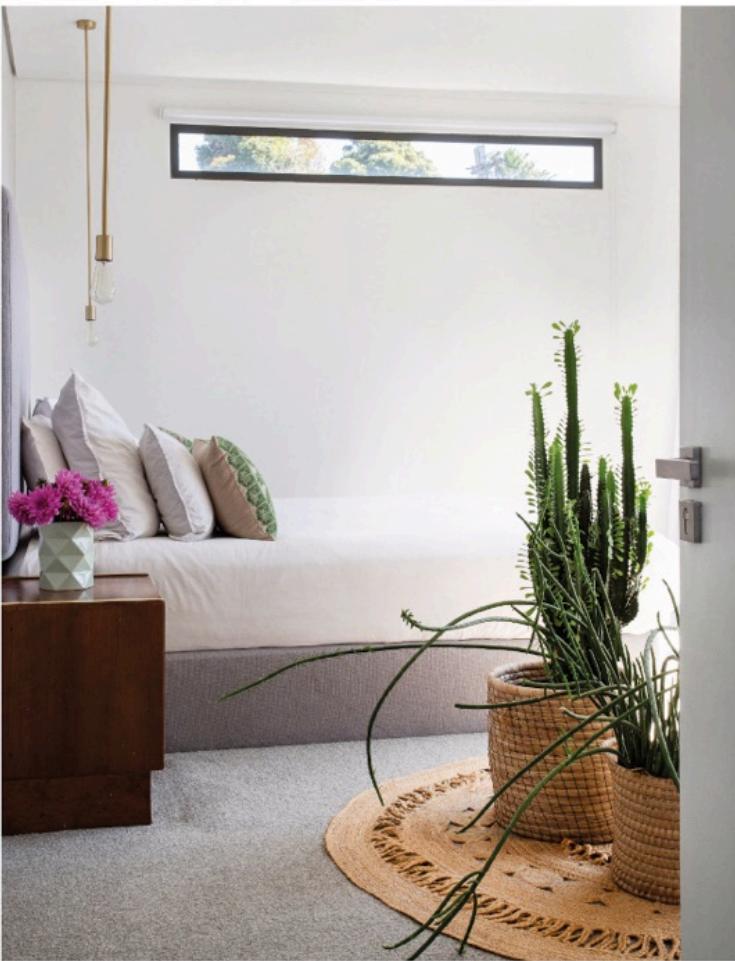
Details on page 60.

seasonal preferences. 'In summer, it's a joy to open up the house so that the boundaries between the inside and outside blur. But Marvin loves the cold and in winter he spends most of the time in front of the outdoor fireplace, so I'm fortunate that we can at least see each other,' she says with a laugh.

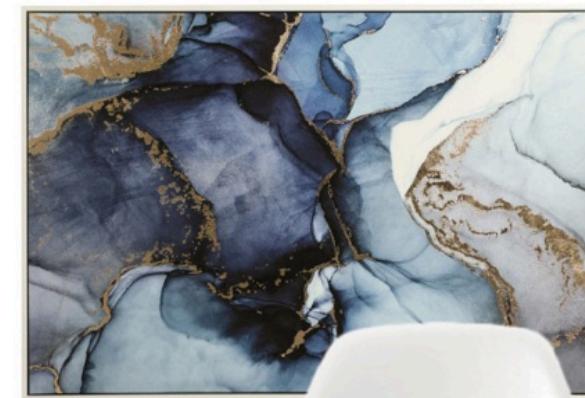
As with the architecture, the furnishings present a visual yin and yang of old and new. Comforting and engaging, the spaces give the impression that, rather than the result of measured choices, they've evolved over time. Cara's love for mid-century modern furniture is evident. 'I love old things that don't appear old,' she remarks. 'As I grew up in the '80s, anything postmodern feels old enough to be cool – there's a timelessness in clean lines and simple forms.' Prized in the collection is an extendable dining table with vinyl-upholstered chairs dating back 60 years. Gifted by the previous homeowners, it's used in the kitchen where the Savens sit down to dinner most nights.

And what of wallpaper? Aside from tropical scenes in the downstairs bathroom (page 26) and Cara's office, there's not much wall space left because of the large walls of glass. 'Since every room has its own canvas of exterior views that changes as the day progresses, it's not missed at all,' says Cara.





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