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A linear pool was created for lap swimming. The design is such that the pool integrates with the lawn area, which was substantially extended due to levelling by means of retaining walls.

Symmetry & Light

location: Bishops court, Cape Town | architecture: COA – Craft of Architecture - www.coasite.com | interior design: Jo Carlin – www.jocarlindesign.co.za & Adrie Lord | landscaper: Carrie Latimer | photography: Johann Lourens

The owners of this contemporary home contacted architects COA directly after seeing a project they were completing in Hermanus, Cape Town. They were struck by its lightness and abundant use of glass and envisaged a similar look and feel for a new home they were planning. ➤





these pages:

A dual-sided living space offers views to the north over Kirstenbosch with a private internal courtyard to the south. Double volumes create maximum views of the mountain range on entrance. Tall glass panels obviate the use of steel beams, and glass doors retract to open up the living area – and flow to the outside entertainment area.

opposite top: Artwork by Martin Osner.

Ian Gray, one of COA's founders, met with the client on site to discuss the project and their initial brief was to renovate a small house, which already existed. However, says Gray: 'I was stunned by the sheer beauty and location; it was one of the most amazing sites I had seen in Cape Town.'

'The location in Bishopscourt, Constantia overlooks the World Heritage site of Kirstenbosch Gardens. From the proposed location of their future reception rooms one couldn't even see a neighbouring house due to the trees, which framed the overall view of the mountain and Kirstenbosch.'

Within 20 minutes of visualising possibilities, clients and architect jointly agreed to demolish the existing building and begin again with a white page. The clients' initial brief was that they wanted to walk into the house and be enraptured by the mountain view, hence the double volume entrance space captures the top of the



above: The kitchen is focused around an AGA stove as a central element used for cooking and heating. The kitchen is split into zones that cater for the couple, or larger groups.

opposite: Designed to incorporate steel, timber and glass, the staircase was custom-made yet created challenges insofar as the stability of the structure.

mountain. They also required the visual of the house to flow through both sides of the living space – but hide the vehicle access – hence the private courtyard. Lastly, they needed accommodation to cater for an extended family and children; but still wanted to be able to utilise a smaller part of the home for themselves, residing just as a couple.

Large volumes are difficult to keep warm in winter, so COA separated the house into zones. In winter the owners are able to utilise fewer rooms – the kitchen, family room and master bedroom (without the massive volumes) – and easily close off the rest of the house. For the summer months the house can be opened up to

include all the rooms and shared space. The architects thus created a passive design principle of shading the north glass, while using double-glazing throughout.

Client interaction was key to the success of this project. The client owns a construction company specialising in concrete systems and contributed valuable solutions in pushing the envelope on some of the cantilevers, especially the master bedroom where the corner is free from columns.

Added to this, the client's son who built the house specialises in the construction of high-end homes and luxury property developments around Cape Town. Says architect Ian Gray: 'His attention to detail enhanced the



this page: A cantilever roof precludes the use of columns to enable uninterrupted views of Kirstenbosch and the mountain.



design from every aspect and we were lucky to work with a contractor who actually improved upon many of the details we were trying to formulate.'

The establishment of a world-class landscaping element and project management was included upfront in the design process, and client participation was available on-site virtually full time. This made for an interesting dynamic – the family working so closely together with the architects in order to realise a finely tailored result.

Editor's Note:

COA is an award-winning architecture company founded in 2006 by partners Ian Gray, John van Wyk and Michal Korycki. Projects undertaken include a portfolio, ranging from master planning and urban design, single and multi-residential, hotels and lodges, commercial and mixed use, interiors and brand architecture, retirement estates, educational and sports facilities, as well as bridges and infrastructure. [h](#)