



ORIENTAL OPULENCE

EAST ELEGANTLY MEETS WEST IN THIS UPDATED VICTORIAN HOME IN CAPE TOWN'S SEA POINT

TEXT HILARY PRENDINI TOFFOLI PHOTOGRAPHS GREG COX



Coco the greyhound and Calvin the Lhasa apso sit on the stoep of this Sea Point home owned by Jas Jhol and Andre Meeuwis. Andre's father made the giant metal bird cage and the silver-leafed table is from India. Staghorn ferns grow on the old chandelier hanging from the tree. OPPOSITE A few of the 26 bird cages Andre has collected all over Asia hang on the wall of the guest bedroom.



Coco and Carlo pose on the stairway leading to the new bedroom section. The mirrors were designed by the owners. The mirrored table is from Block & Chisel (blockandchisel.co.za) and the black glass chandelier is from Ligne Roset (ligne-roset.co.za). OPPOSITE A Buddha from Indonesia sits beside ceramics from Adriaan Lochner Lifestyle (adriaanlochnerlifestyle.com); the chandelier in the dining room is from Delos (delos.co.za) and the Victorian dresser was acquired at an auction.



The decor with which interior designers choose to surround themselves at home can be very different from what they do for their clients. On their own turf their personalities emerge, and the design insights they've gleaned over the years appear distilled and refined. That's certainly the impression you get in the Sea Point home of Jas Jhol and Andre Meeuwis. It's not like the grand imposing showpieces created by their company, Sugarbakers, many of which are in Asia as well as Europe since Jas was born and raised in Singapore.

Though quietly opulent, the Cape Town house where they live with their five dogs is a warm inviting space in which you immediately feel comfortable. 'That's what our home is about,' says Jas. 'A welcoming place for friends and family. Our home reflects who we are and what we stand for. It's classic and ageless.'

Their Victorian villa was once part of a larger land parcel, with a garden stretching out to the sea front. The couple added an upstairs bedroom section and totally transformed the place, yet it has not been stripped of its Victorian character. 'We tried to keep as much of its former dignity as possible,' Jas explains.

The revamp took eight months. They lived in the house the entire time with their dogs, overseeing the restructuring they had designed. In the study they covered the floor with large black-and-white tiles that create what Jas calls 'a nice colonial contrast' with the rest of the house, which has dark strip flooring. They loved the arched windows and doors, and the stoep with columns. 'They're features of that period so we maintained them and added more,' says Jas. 'We have a passion for heritage and character. Contemporary homes don't do anything for our souls. Being true to the past of this house was key.'


However they couldn't resist creating a unique structure that plays games with the strict Victorian lines: a Chinese pagoda built on a small raised part of the garden overlooking the pool, its exotic shape enhanced by a giant sculptural chunk of Indonesian driftwood. It's designed to be part of the outdoor entertainment area and leads out into the garden across an unusual water feature.

This is where the two designers' skills really come to the fore. 'It's not a big property – only 365m² – so we had to maximise the space in the garden,' says Jas, and so one side of the pool is completely mirrored, which expands the dimensions of the brilliant blue water.▷



For both of them, water plays an important role in every property. To reach their front door you cross a large attractive pond filled with 32 koi, eight of which were flown in from Singapore; there are also water channels peppered with water plants surrounding the house. It was also important for the owners to keep the stoep at the front door where they receive their guests, which gives the house its heritage value.

Plants abound in the interior as well, in particular orchids and kentia palms, which Jas says are very colonial. They remind him of Singapore's Raffles Hotel. 'We love greenery. The property is alive when it's green,' he adds. The plants complement the Victorian feel of the house, which remains a striking characteristic. Because of all the greenery the owners have kept the wall colours neutral – a combination of soft pale green and cream throughout.

Though their aim with the decor of the house was not specifically Eastern, it just happened. 'We collect pieces as we travel. There is always a special place for a special piece acquired somewhere in the world and the old bones of this Victorian love beautifully appointed pieces to make it strong and proud.'  **Sugarbakers Decor and Design**, sugarbakers.asia

FROM LEFT In the breakfast room brass bird cages from India perch on a coconut shell table from the Philippines. Stairs lead up to the study; a wooden walkway to the front door crosses the pond where koi swim beneath an Indonesian statue carved out of a single piece of moonstone. OPPOSITE A kentia palm brings greenery into the living room. Both the wingback chair and the love seat are covered in fabric by Hertex Fabrics (hertex.co.za). The bronze Angel of Death carrying a wounded soldier is from the Philippines and the white Chinese porcelain stool is from Block & Chisel. The curtains are raw silk from India in two shades.



JAS AND ANDRE'S HOME TRUTHS

For us luxury is something you can't put a monetary value to. Luxury is having the space and energy to create the surroundings you feel truly at home in. **The reason we love renovation projects is** that they allow us to express our creativity and put our personal stamp on a house. **Our most indulgent home purchase was** the bronze lady in the living room. She's the Angel of Death and she's carrying an injured soldier from the battlefield. She was created in the Philippines but we found her in Saudi Arabia when we were doing an installation for a furniture showroom. **We've collected** many things over the years including bird cages, which Andre has a passion for (Jas). We have hilarious stories of cages purchased in Hong Kong, Bali, Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia - how we came about them and how we had to struggle to get them onto flights with us. **The music you're likely to hear in this house is** classical or opera. **Our kitchen is** the heart of our home. Even if you don't come for a meal, be prepared to have a plate of something delicious placed in front of you. Jas believes food feeds the soul - he's a genius in the kitchen (Andre). **We are vegetarian** purely because of our love for animals. Our dogs are all rescue dogs or re-homed. We don't want to encourage the trade of puppy mills. They're like our kids - Cindy and Calvin the Lhaso Apsos, Coco and Carlo the Italian greyhounds, and Cino the Jack Russell, leader of the pack and actually a reincarnated human, we believe.

FROM LEFT The mahogany four-poster bed in the master bedroom is from Bali, with cushions in raw silk from India. The owners' friend Brian Rolfe (brianrolfeart.co.za) painted the portrait of Andre's mother; Jas sits on a Portuguese desk with brass inlays. Behind Andre are two wooden female figures from Indonesia, a carved kist from Korea and the Indian portraits of maharajahs are from Block & Chisel. OPPOSITE A silk lantern from Vietnam hangs in the guest bedroom. The 18 wall mirrors were custom made for the owners. The antique mirror shades on the bedside lamps are from Hadedashop.com).