

# *The Time Traveller*



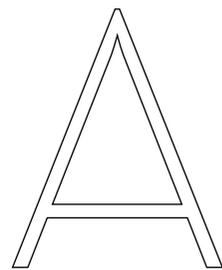
ARCHITECT DOMINIC TOUWEN'S COLOURFULLY ECLECTIC CAPE TOWN HOME IS TESTAMENT TO HIS LOVE OF TRAVEL AND A UNIQUE POINT OF VIEW

TEXT KELLY ADAMI PRODUCTION DEAN VAN ASWEGEN PHOTOGRAPHS ELSA YOUNG

ABOVE The living room opens onto a terraced courtyard garden to welcome the outside in OPPOSITE PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Meadow-style planting gives the garden a wild feel; the desk in the guest bedroom displays artisanal ceramics; warm and cool hues give the garden depth; the layers of foliage give rise to a view of the mountain; in the dining room Queen Anne dining chairs with mismatched Indian block-printed seats add charming detail; thickly planted beds provide rich texture



# URBAN SANCTUARY



sort of living archive, one's home records who we are and where we've been. This concept rings true for architect Dominic Touwen, a self-described 'obsessive collector', whose hillside home in Cape Town's Bo-Kaap expresses an evocative and charming blend of local and international style.

Through living and travelling abroad, Touwen's aesthetic sense has been developed and his home evolved into a carefully curated scrapbook of the places he has visited. A passion for textiles and ceramics, and for mixing old and new, is

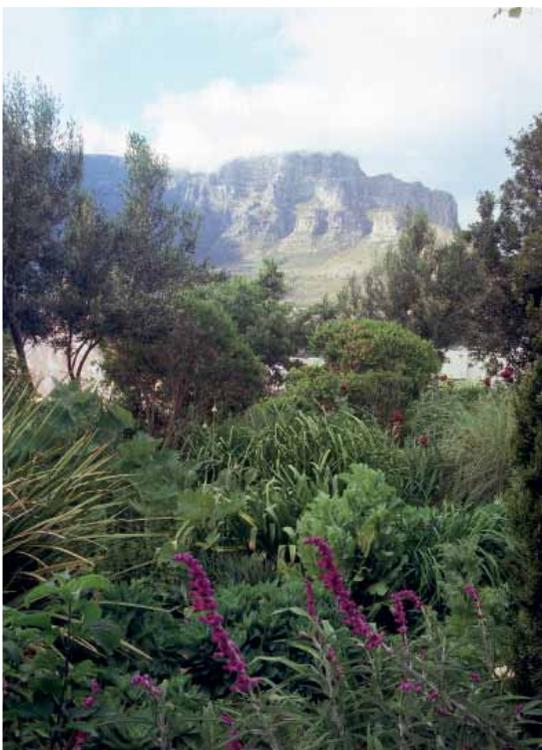
what drives his wanderlust and has acted as the inspiration for this interior. 'Collecting is such a rewarding pastime because it gives travelling a sense of purpose,' he says.

## *Past and present*

A traditionalist at heart, Touwen is known professionally for his renovations and restorations, preferring to honour the past and conserve what he can. The same can be said for his approach to his home's interior. 'I can appreciate neutral, modernist interiors but could personally never live like that,' he says. His style leans rather towards the layered, eclectic; collected brocanteur boho. He enjoys mixing good art pieces with 'rubbish', but he

feels 'that one painting on a wall needs to be really spectacular to hold the space; otherwise it just fades into insignificance,' he explains.

Ikats from Uzbekistan and suzanis and kilims from Turkey inject the space with exotic flavour, while once-off pieces found at junk auctions add unmatched character. A white-painted cane screen filtering dappled light into the living room was bought at an Ashbey's Galleries auction and is one of Touwen's most cherished finds. 'I bid on things no one else wanted! I think they thought I was mad. But I love painted cane – it reminds me so much of my childhood and of being on holiday. And why shouldn't we live like we're on holiday?' he remarks. ▶





In the main bedroom, scenic landscapes and still lifes imbue the space with a feel for the outdoors. Touwen's eclectic approach is evident here in the layering of pattern – the ikats and suzannis are from Uzbekistan and the printed indigo quilt is from India. Green bottle lamps made from old Cape glass wine bottles, frame the bed and reflect light, giving the room an ethereal quality



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT With its mix of traditional and exotic, Touwen's home defies strict classification; a collection of ceramics which form charming tableaux; quirky pieces from around the world decorate the living-room mantelpiece; the beloved painted screen has pride of place in the living room; 'I'm loving turquoise at the moment. It's a great colour for pepping up a room,' remarks Touwen; the living area is the central 'heart' of Touwen's home

With light-filled interior spaces, the house, which had to undergo a drastic renovation before Touwen was ready to move in, bears no resemblance to its original state. 'It was a seriously ugly house,' says Touwen, 'with five bedrooms connected by passages and no living areas. The original house was a total rabbit warren.'

While the front of the house faces Table Mountain, most of the living is done out back, a dichotomy which has been resolved by gutting the interior and opening it up to function around a central axis, connecting the entrance to the

back courtyard. 'It gives the house transparency, with the living and dining areas in the centre and the utility rooms off to the sides,' he says.

### *All things considered*

Designed with a deliberate focus on the beautifully landscaped back courtyard, the living area looks out onto a simple, concrete water feature set against a retaining wall cascading with greenery. Next to it, Touwen created a private, covered outdoor lapa – adjacent to the kitchen for year-round entertaining – that takes

advantage of the north west-facing back garden. 'It's really great in any climate,' he says.

Touwen's holistic attitude towards design is evident in the effortless flow between indoor and outdoor. 'Architecture, interior design and even landscaping should be fully integrated for a house to function well. The days of separation are over.' A tribute to Touwen's sophisticated aesthetic sense, love of travel and all things green, this city abode is a sanctuary for urban escape.

■ *Dominic Touwen* ☎ 083 703 8461;  
 ☞ [www.dominictouwen.co.za](http://www.dominictouwen.co.za)