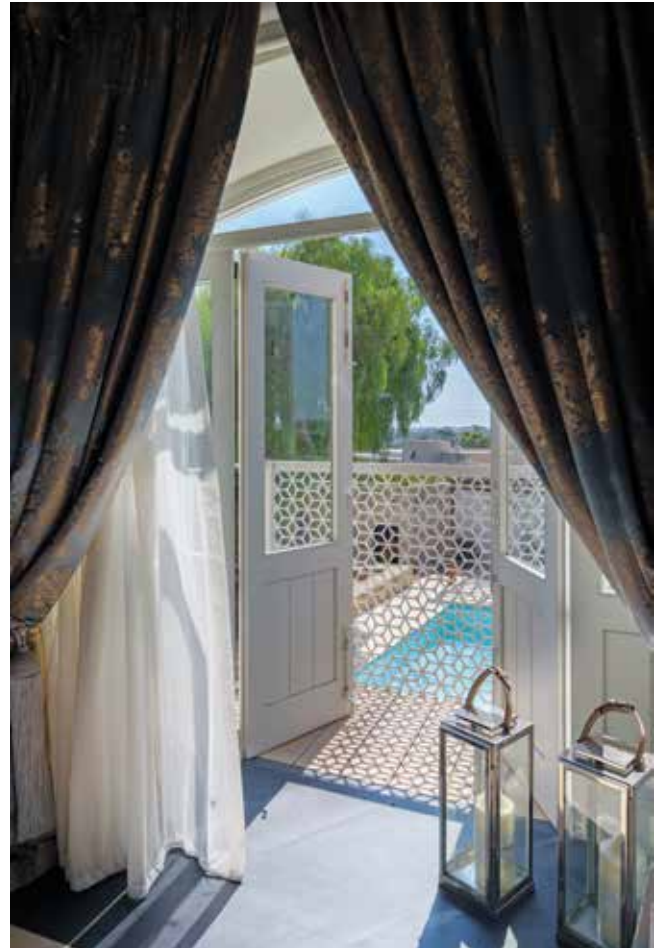


THE EVERYDAY RETREAT





Careful detailing and close collaboration between designers and craftspeople turned two ordinary bedrooms into a magical space for children and a calming retreat for their parents.

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This project involved two rooms – the main bedroom and its walk-in wardrobe, and a nursery. It may have been only two rooms, but due to the attention to detail that was implemented, a small project ended up being a fairly complex one.

When we first saw the main bedroom, it was large and cold, and the walk-in wardrobe was awkward and irregular. There was a large unused fireplace in the corner of the room, and the window overlooking the pool was small and did not allow in much natural light.

The nature of the house and the design brief were discussed in much detail with the client. The look and feel that we wanted to achieve was almost 'French chateau meets high end hotel', where the client could actually enjoy spending time in the bedroom getting ready for a night out or simply winding down after a busy day of work. Our design was aimed at creating a sanctuary of calmness where the client could relax and escape from the pressures of everyday life. Functionality and aesthetics had to work together to ensure that the space is used efficiently while looking visually stunning and serene.

One of the first design decisions was how to redistribute the space to make the bedroom feel cosy and easier to heat and cool, and to create a well-sized walk-in wardrobe including a dressing area. To gain more space, the design incorporated part of the landing outside the bedroom, which was not being used anyway. A slightly smaller landing meant the design could increase the amount of storage space in the walk-in wardrobe.

All the existing soffits were removed to expose the ceiling timber beams. We usually recommend leaving timber beams uncovered. When soffits are installed, you are unable to see any problems that could develop in the timber beams, so it is best to leave them exposed.

Removing the soffits helped in adding a little extra height to the room. The gypsum boarding was used to create slender dividers between the walk-in wardrobe and the main bedroom. To make the space look larger, we washed the walls in a light minty gray. The TV unit, which was built in a way to 'iron out' the skewed walls and make the room shape look more regular, was also finished in the minty gray. This feature also provided a means of concealing services, including air conditioning, behind the gypsum lining of the TV unit

The bed is positioned opposite the TV and next to the window which was opened up and turned into a door leading to a balcony. Custom-made panelling above the bed and an upholstered headboard follow similar proportions and colour tones. We considered using wallpaper behind the bed, but were lucky enough to meet Dominique Ciancio, a talented artist, whom we commissioned to design and install the intricate panelling above the bed. The different shades of powder blue, cool gray and white, together with the antique-style carvings which form part of the panelling, crown the bed and give the room a regal feel without overwhelming the design.

The bed itself and the chaise longue were custom made using fabrics and muted colours selected to complement the panelling above the bed. A floral pattern in French blue and champagne threads through the runner draped over the bed. The same fabric is used for the curtain that frames the door leading to a balcony. The detailing of the overall design is carried through to the balcony. A contemporary design of leaf-shaped elements was laser cut through a sheet of metal which was then used as the railing of the custom-made balcony. A light fitting integrated in the base of the balcony provides lighting for the pool and outdoor dining area below.

Throughout the bedroom and the walk-in wardrobe, the flooring is made up of a black Cardoso stone border surrounding limestone persiano slabs with a brass insert in between. Installing a flooring border disguised the irregularity of the walls, which is typical in this type of dwelling, adding a contemporary classic feel to the rooms.



The biggest design-detailing challenge was in the walk-in wardrobe. The black border throughout the floor area needed to be equally offset from the custom-made wardrobes. The furniture was installed towards the final stages of the re-fit, which meant close team-work between the carpenter and the tile layer.

The panelling in the walk-in wardrobe makes the awkwardly shaped space feel larger, more regular and richer. The contemporary colour paired with the classical appearance of the paneling gives the space a timeless feel. Small ivory-looking globes used as handles on the panelled doors and drawers include carved detail. Panelling was introduced in the doors of the wardrobes, the front panels of the drawers and on the cladding around the mirror. The 'vanity area' includes his-and-hers vanity units and is surrounded with large light bulbs and detailed carving. The interior of the jewelry showcase was finished by the artist Dominique Ciancio, complementing the panelling in the bedroom.

A slender track light runs through the centre of the walk-in wardrobe, and the light fittings hanging from the track appear as though they are floating in mid-air. The space around the one window in the walk-in area was turned into a seating area with a bench below the window decorated with tea velvet cushions.

More panelling was introduced to the landing. All internal doors throughout the sleeping quarters of the house were custom-made and finished with classic moulding. Patterned glass was carefully selected for some of the doors. Brass handles and locks add to the classic contemporary feel of the space.





The nursery across the landing from the bedroom is a long and narrow room which did not get much light and which was awkwardly shaped. The renovation and design of the space had to give it an extended lifespan. Although the client had a young family at the time, the nursery needed to be suitable for eventual use by older children and teenagers.

One of the two walls along the length of the room had two alcoves within its thickness. This wall was treated as a 'light box' in a design that acts as a night-light for young children and will also work well as a feature in a teenagers' bedroom. An abstract line drawing of a tree carved out of sheets of marine plywood was then used as a lining over the long wall. Light fittings were installed behind the white lining. When switched on, their light glows through the perforations which form the shape of a tree with leaves and flowers appearing to fall randomly from its branches. The effect is magical. Within this wall lining, the alcove was made use of and hidden doors, which lead to a store cupboard, are incorporated within the wooden sheets.

The floor of this room was finished with two different materials to make it feel wider. The half of the room nearest the door is covered in a geometric pattern of blueish-gray textured tiles. The rest of the floor is finished with small solid oak pieces of parquet.

Although the project covered just two rooms, it involved much detailing and teamwork to create an enchanting interior. The seamless appearance of the design within the spaces could only be achieved through collaboration and a commitment to the same standard of detailing and precision. ■



Photo: Atelier Maison