

# 100+ years 100+ buildings

ARCHITECTURE  
IN A DEMOCRATIC  
SOUTH AFRICA

**CONTRIBUTORS** KAREL BAKKER • NIC COETZER • JULIAN COOKE • CARLA DE BEER  
• PIET DE BEER • JEAN-PIERRE DE LA PORTE • KOBUS DU PREEZ • KAREN EICKER •  
ANNE FITCHET • HUGH FRASER • GUS GERNEKE • PAUL KOTZE • HANNAH LE ROUX  
• MARGUERITE LE ROUX • SCHALK LE ROUX • ALAN LIPMAN • IAIN LOW • PATRICK  
MCINERNEY • JONATHAN NOBLE • ROGER FISHER • AMIRA OSMAN • WALLY PETERS  
• LONE POULSEN • PATTABI RAMAN • NINA SAUNDERS • MELINDA SILVERMAN •  
ALTA STEENKAMP • GERT SWART • DANIE THERON • RUDOLF VAN RENSBURG •  
GRAHAM YOUNG • **CONVENED AND EDITED BY 'ORA JOUBERT**

WESTERN CAPE: Hangklip

## 77. HOUSE SPRECHER (2000)

Stefan Antoni Olmesdahl Truen Architects

clients: Margaret & Paul Sprecher; Diana Vives • architectural team: Stefan Antoni (BArch UCT) + Mark Rielly (BArch UPE) • quantity surveyors: Gosling Associates • electrical engineers: GP le Roux • structural engineers: Henry Fagan & Partners • wind consultant: Graham Ramsay Architect • contractor: Ian Martin Construction • landscape designers: Hillary Nursery

## selected bibliography

le ROUX, F. *Sea Farm House, Hangklip, Western Cape, Leading Architecture & Design* (Randburg) Sept.-Oct. 2002: 55-61 • ARMOUR, M. *Beach House, Cape Agulhas, Down south - homes and interiors in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball) 2004: 50-53 • BARTON, M. et al. *Sea Farm House. Home: new directions in world architecture and design* (Australia: Briza) 2006: 20, 426-429

## photographers

Stefan Antoni • Stephen Inggs

Stefan Antoni:

stefan@sota.com



site plan



House Sprecher, situated in the Sea Farm Nature Reserve, fulfilled the desire of the clients for a holiday home respectful of its spectacular setting: a  *fynbos*-covered landscape with panoramic views of Hangklip and the Atlantic Ocean beyond a rocky shoreline.

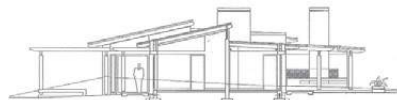
The brief called for a straightforward arrangement of open-plan informal living, privacy for sleeping and a contemporary aesthetic of low maintenance. Given the climatic extremes of the coast, the challenge was to design a house that takes advantage of the views, while providing areas for comfortable indoor and outdoor living.

The house has a sensible north-south orientation, with its central living and dining areas extending outwards in both directions. This design response skilfully addresses the duality of views to mountain and sea, enabling one to alternate between these two outdoor spaces depending on the weather. The magnificence of the surrounds are continually experienced throughout the house, even from the bathrooms.

A clerestory, created by the manipulation of the low pitched roofs, ensures adequate cross-ventilation and provides internal comfort, especially during windy days that are typical of the Western Cape climate. Exposed timber rafters with reed ceilings of varying heights offer discreet cover, whereas arched plaster ceilings define transitional zones or create a spatial intimacy where deemed appropriate. The subtle interiors are further enhanced by pale sandstone surfaces and a monochromatic colour scheme.

The architects were at pains to create an unimposing, horizontally accentuated building, respectful of the level site. The discerning choice of materials for both low maintenance and camouflage adds to the building's gentle dialogue with the landscape, reinforcing its intent as a quiet retreat to nature. With its palette of natural materials, subdued colours and subtle textures, House Sprecher blends elegantly, uncomplicatedly and unobtrusively with its natural surroundings.

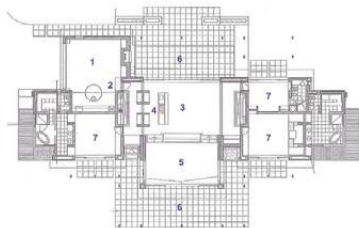
contributor: Alta Steenkamp School of Architecture, Planning & Geomatics, University of Cape Town



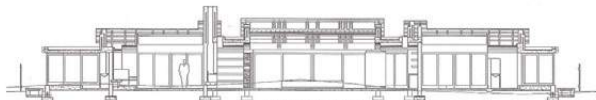
latitudinal section



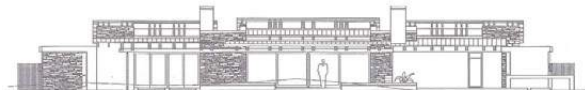
south-east elevation



ground floor plan



longitudinal section



north-west elevation



WESTERN CAPE: Pearl Bay, Yzerfontein

## 78. YZERFONTEIN HOUSE (2000)

Stefan Antoni Olmesdahl Truen

client: Michael Klein • architectural team: Stefan Antoni (BArch UCT) + Richard Townsend (BArch UCT) + Holger Deppe (Dipl.-Arch Karlsruhe, Germany) • quantity surveyors: SBDS • structural engineers: TCA • contractor: Lagoon Builders

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Low, I. (ed.) *Pearl Bay, Yzerfontein, Digest of South African Architecture* (Cape Town) 2006/2007: 90-93  
 • Phaidon. *Yzerfontein House, The Phaidon atlas of 21st century world architecture* (London: Phaidon) 2006: 593  
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## photographers

Stefan Antoni • David Southwood (Häuser)

Stefan Antoni:  
 stefan@saota.com

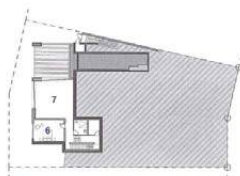
Yzerfontein House forms part of a collection of South African seaside dwellings that sensitively affirm the universality of modernist principles. The brief called for a three-bedroom holiday house, combined with a photography studio, executed in a contemporary idiom. It also had to respond to the fragile context of the West Coast and its climatic extremes. The intersecting geometries of exaggerated horizontal and vertical planes are a dramatic, but tactful, counterpoint to its duned setting.

The house is accessed from the north-eastern boundary to maximize views on the opposite side. Upon entry, one is faced with a choice either to ascend to the upper bedroom level or descend to the basement studio. The comfortable series of spaces are unobtrusively organised and logically connected. However, the simplicity of the organization does not belie the astute manipulation of site, section and volume. It intensifies Loos' *raumplan* by creating the impression of a highly diversified building, yet within a small footprint, superbly modulated. The gradual transition of the built mass, combined with its partial submergence behind the dunes, testifies to particular contextual consideration.

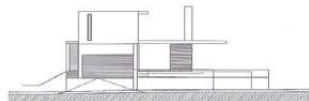
The restricted palette of materials underlines the sculptural quality of the composition and its sheer three-dimensional unfolding. The architects also deliberately muted the tectonics by incorporating all support elements into planes and surfaces. In addition, the building appears to defy gravity with its large apertures, unsupported spans and dramatic cantilevers.

In the history and dissemination of Modernism, the holiday house has an unexplored role. Schindler's 1930's villas for American holidaymakers absorbed and refined, even domesticated, many of the audacious gestures of le Corbusier, Mies and Gropius in Europe. In South Africa, contemporary holiday homes are reviving the opportunity to re-engage with the basic tenets of Orthodox Modernism, resulting in striking mutations and discreet realisations. Yzerfontein House epitomises such a discerning modernist interpretation with its sparse vocabulary and geometric potency, while deftly adhering to the practical requirements of its holiday brief.

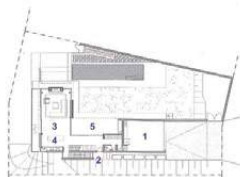
Prof. 'Ora Joubert Department of Architecture, University of Pretoria



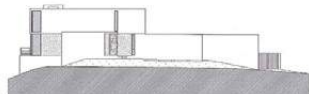
basement floor plan



north-east elevation



ground floor plan



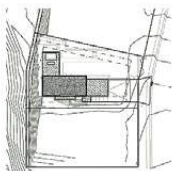
south-east elevation



first floor plan



south-west elevation



site plan



