

Designer Michele Throssell's mastery of scale and proportion can be seen in this bedroom where shape and size are balanced. The natural textures and tones are a signature of the designer, always interpreted however, in a contemporary way

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SUNSHINE COAST

A KWAZULU-NATAL HOUSE COMBINES THE BEST OF BREEZY BEACH STYLE AND AN UPSCALED APPROACH TO HOLIDAY LIVING



Chalky off-white Fibonacci tiles from Continental Stone provide a clean cool shell for the open-plan kitchen, dining and sitting areas. The furniture is unfussy and easy – white bamboo-style chairs and a warm modern dining table look out onto the expansive verandah. A Kurt Pio etching hangs on the wall

Similar elements can be seen in the universal beach-house vernacular, found the world over in only slight variations on the theme of whitewashed wood, sea-life motifs and lashings of blue and white. The game changers, though, are the designers who take this foolproof formula and add another dimension, without losing that unmistakable breathe-out-and-wind-down feel. Designer Michele Throssell's recent redesign (she reduced the structure to barely two walls and started over) of a house in Zimbali offers this in spades, but also contains a level of polish not often found in holiday bolt holes.

This was both intentional and as a result of Throssell's inherent pulled-together style. The owners – a couple with two teenage girls – live in Jo'burg, but plan to make this their full-time post when their daughters finish school. So their brief to Throssell was to create a ▶

BELOW A sitting area's bamboo-clad feature wall is in keeping with the tropical tone OPPOSITE PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT The mezzanine TV area is made cosy with patchwork Nguni rugs. Lacquered console tables

introduce an element of gloss and a painting by Kristin Yang picks up the sea green; Paola Lenti poufs available from The Modern Garden Company on the verandah are easily transportable inside; the living areas all look onto the incredible views

space that would for the moment provide carefree holiday downtime and would also be able to serve as a permanent home in the near future. Here Throssell's own style came into play – her signature use of natural textures intertwined with carefully selected glamorous pieces was further heightened by a determination to avoid the trap of coastal clichés.

This fine line between real life and relaxation was walked deftly by Throssell, who kept the scheme light and laid-back but also managed to infuse it with a grown-up groundedness and a resolved sense of sophistication. A consistency of shapes and shades eases you from one room to the next with each space possessing an identity of its own while also existing as a distinctive part of the whole.

Throssell's choices of colour and texture were a nod to the setting's exotic undertone – the humid tropicality and jungle-like vegetation of KZN's seductive north coast conjured warm sea greens and flashes of yellow as a twist on the expected cobalt and white. Reflective surfaces and plenty of golden wood amplify the sunny lightness of the open-plan spaces. The view here is king however and from the generous wide verandah all that can be seen is the dense foliage leading up to an empty beach and the ocean beyond. Idyllic indeed.

A spectrum of whites provides the foundation for concurrent themes of modern and natural, clean but warm. 'My aim with the space was to create something that felt easy and organic but on a clean scale,' says Throssell. Natural textures interpreted in a structured ▶









way – Nguni hide woven in a diamond-patterned rug, linear bamboo wall panelling and geometrically designed carved wooden stools – illustrate this tension of contrasting elements.

The materials also point to the ever-present South African-ness in Throssell's designs. 'I always feel a space isn't complete until I've added something local. It must be something instinctive,' she explains. She always tries to incorporate South African designers and artists when doing an interior and is a loyal supporter of home-grown. Throssell saw an opportunity to highlight some favourites when it came to choosing art – the owners have an impressive collection but she felt the tone of these didn't have the lightheartedness of the location, so new works were needed. Pieces on the walls by artists Kurt Pio, Roger Horrocks, Bowen Boshier, Jansem and Ade, many botanically themed and in complementary shades of green and yellow and graphic black, give a deliciously distinctive local flavour.

A less obvious theme employed by Throssell, subconsciously she claims and if so, further proof of her skill at creating a cohesive whole – is the unifying graphic device of circles and squares. This playful juxtaposition can be seen in anything from the Bamileke stools and rugs to a mirror in the entrance area and adds to the sense of contrast she's achieved throughout – the softness of circles and clean-lined squares creating a buoyant balance.

This element is almost a metaphor for the whole – soft and hard, polished but playful and above all, faultlessly composed. A casually sophisticated crash pad that bodes well for a future of relaxed living.

■ Michele Throssell Interiors ☎ 032 946 0590; 🌐 www.michelethrossell.co.za

ABOVE Pillowcases in Jim Thompson fabric from T&Co display Throssell's affinity for geometric pattern.

An artwork by Lindy Sale hangs above the pedestal OPPOSITE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Classic meets contemporary in one of the girls' rooms; raw-silk ottomans and

a Vistosi chandelier are glamorous elements Throssell introduced into the master suite. An abundance of glass and mirrors, this one from Tom's Art, is a thread that runs through; the master bedroom is a balance of soft and linear; contemporary bathroom cabinets enhance the easy beachy feel