

HOUSE / KILLARNEY

treasure TROVE



The Killarney apartment of interior designer Michele Throssell reflects her love of heritage and the glamour of Johannesburg, but adds a little Durban flavour for good measure

TEXT ZODWA KUMALO-VALENTINE PHOTOGRAPHS ELSA YOUNG

THIS SPREAD, FROM LEFT

This corner apartment in Killarney's Rapallo building in Johannesburg boasts amazing views over the city; vibrant flamingo wallpaper from Home Fabrics (homefabrics.co.za) sets the tone for the interiors, where colour and pattern combine with glamorous details like a Sputnik light fitting from Con Amore and a mirrored cupboard and shelving unit that was designed by Michele and made by carpenter Craig Krischker.



M

ichele Throssell of the eponymous interior design company and her husband, Bruce, fell in love with, bought and renovated a three-bedroom flat in Killarney, one of Johannesburg's original apartment suburbs.

Located in the highly sought-after Rapallo building, the apartment is an ode to art, retro

design and vintage and romantic sensibilities. It almost feels like an extension of the Rapallo itself, which was built in the 1950s by Italian prisoners of war and features an original Art Deco water installation and Picasso-inspired oil painting by Armando Baldinelli in the entrance hall. It's not surprising that the building immediately attracted Michele, and they secured a corner apartment with gorgeous views overlooking Johannesburg.

While Michele is mostly based in Durban, Bruce, who is in financial services, and their son James, who works as a lawyer, both live in Johannesburg. They acquired the inner-city apartment so they could have a permanent Johannesburg family home base – Michele visits once a month for a night or two or the odd weekend. Her other children, Joseph and Rebecca, both work in interior design and live in Cape Town.

In a renovation project that took just six months to complete, Michele has managed to make the interiors feel open and expansive by knocking down walls and installing mirrors and clever storage solutions, perhaps most impressively in the kitchen. The room, which was originally cramped and walled in, spills out and feels extended by a custom-made bar – complete with brass fittings, glass shelving and mirrors. 'I like the idea of mixing a lot of texture, combining marble, stone and brass with wicker,' says Michele.

This can be seen in a large kitchen cupboard she designed and had custom-made by her joiner. It features wooden drawers and rattan cabinet doors that neatly conceal stacked crockery and a tea-and-coffee station. Appliances such as the washing machine, dryer and bin are all tucked away in cupboards with sliding drawers, and a large, full-gas stainless steel cooker by Smeg is where James does most of the cooking. Handmade green tiles on the kitchen walls create a warm, homely feel, while Nero Marquina marble countertops and brass kickplates provide a luxurious, >

THIS PAGE, FROM TOP

Set against a backdrop of handmade emerald green tiles are cutting boards and an enamel black and white jug, all from Weylandts (weylandts.co.za); the kitchen's Nero Marquina marble countertops and a brilliantly reflective stainless steel cooker and hood from Smeg (smeg.co.za) are just some of the apartment's luxurious inclusions.

OPPOSITE PAGE

Plant pots with basil and rosemary line the kitchen's windowsill above the sink, and it is from this vantage point that you can admire views of the koppie and back gardens of the complex. The custom rattan and wood cupboard is both an eye-catching element in the space and conceals appliances, crockery and other essentials.



THIS SPREAD, CLOCKWISE FROM THIS PAGE

Natural light fills the living room, where a globular fitting from Maxim lighting (maximdecor.net) draws attention to the beautiful pressed ceiling. The glass and brass coffee tables are from OnSite Gallery (onsitegallery.co.za) and the woven sidetables are from Cécile & Boyd (cecileandboyds.com); atop a sidetable that was bought at an auction is an eclectic blue lamp, whose base was found in a vintage store and whose shade was covered in Aperture fabric in Petrol by Skinny LaMinx (skinnylaminx.com); the dining room looks out onto the seating area and features chairs from Vamp (vampfurniture.blogspot.com) and a Saarinen table by Eero Saarinen for Knoll (knoll.com); curtains in fabric from Hertex's Casamance collection (hertex.co.za) provide a patterned juxtaposition to a shapely white chair from Diesel (diesel.com) and a standing lamp from Decade (decademodern.co.za).



contemporary aesthetic, all offset by moulded terrazzo tiles. 'Because I live at the coast, it's very light and airy, so I wanted a moody contrast with all the greens and dark. I like glamour mixed with a little retro,' Michele says.

To the right of the kitchen, a steel and marble table that Michele eventually had designed and commissioned after fruitless searches for an appropriate surface, is a space used by 'the boys' when they work on their laptops, charge their devices and eat meals. But perhaps the most striking feature of the home is the living area's flamingo wallpaper from Home Fabrics, which adds a characterful feel that flows through the entire home. 'I love pattern and I love colour,' says Michele. 'I'm not afraid to mix patterns and use bold hues.'

Michele is a lover of antique shows and fairs, so much of the apartment's furnishings were sourced from Westgate Walding Auctioneers, 5th Avenue Auctioneers in Johannesburg and Dales Bros in Durban. Some of the home's most alluring decor and art elements are items that she has collected and brought out of long-time storage specifically for this space, and many of them have been repurposed and painted in blues, greys, greens, yellows and oranges.

Ultra-modern light fittings from the now-defunct Con Amore draw attention to the new ceiling mouldings and illuminate a large framed painting of a great blue heron from African Sketchbook in the living area, which hangs above a green custom-made couch and picks up on the blue hues present in a vignette of glass vessels from Decade. The previously reddish parquet flooring is now dark brown and polished, integrating beautifully with the moody interiors. 'I wanted the apartment to feel a little like old Johannesburg,' says Michele – and it's a feeling she has captured perfectly. **Omichelethrossell.co.za**



‘I love pattern and I love colour,’ says Michele. ‘I’m not afraid to mix patterns and use bold hues.’

THIS SPREAD, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

Despite their old-world feel, the bathrooms were completely redone and feature new fittings such as a rose shower head from Antique Bathrooms (antiquebathrooms.co.za). Michele made these spaces bigger by moving their internal walls and keeping the furnishings to a minimum; above the bed in the autumnal-hued guest bedroom is an array of images, including artworks by Kurt Pio and Michael Taylor and an illustration of David Hockney from Decade. The Art Deco-look lamp came with the apartment, while a custom leather headboard and linen from Weylandts and Phlo Studio (phlostudio.co.za) introduce a tactile element to the room; a sideboard from La Grange Interiors (lagrangeinteriors.co.za) is adorned with a vase from Decade and a skull from Emporium of Curiosity (Emporium of Curiosity); the defining characteristic of this bathroom is the Tea Rose wallpaper by York from Hertext. ‘I bought the bath on the side of the road in Parkview, just like that,’ says Michele.



