

## De Goede Hoop Estate - A Slice of Paradise

Renowned artist Wilma Cruise and her husband John have found their slice of paradise tucked away at the foot of the steep slopes of Chapman's Peak, a walk away from the beach. "This morning we saw the first whales while walking along Kommetjie Beach. They were about 100 metres away. We're so blessed."

Their five-hectare farmstead, *De Wildehoek*, on *De Goede Hoop Estate*, is surrounded by fynbos and towering pine trees. It is ideal for Cruise's three horses – the apple of her eye Cara Minze, Gregor and Rio Grand, her prize-winning stallion. Cruise was born and bred in Johannesburg and never thought the day would come when she would live in "Slaapstad".

But Joburg has changed, she says: it's a lot more polluted and there is so much more traffic. "For a long time we refused to look at the big C – crime. Eventually Joburg drove us out."

The couple then drew up a checklist of what they wanted in a new residence. The Karoo was a strong contender because Cruise loves the desert's wide-open spaces. "John wanted the sea and I wanted nature and a Woolies that was ten minutes away. We found this place by accident."

They were to meet an estate agent but wandered in by mistake. "The land spoke to John. It had a strong sense of place. It took us three years to negotiate a piece of land."

The big move from Midrand to Noordhoek took place 18 months ago. "We thought it would be difficult adjusting to Cape Town. There's this myth in Joburg that the people here are unfriendly and the weather is bad. But they are wrong on both counts".

Cruise commissioned Cape Town architect and urban designer Martin Kruger, with a brief of "radical simplicity and lots of natural light".

*De Goede Hoop Estate's* aesthetic code dictated a Cape vernacular style. Kruger's contemporary interpretation of this style is impressive. The main house is made up of two big, barn-shaped buildings that are connected by a 14 metre gallery with white walls and glass showcases for their art collection.

One barn is their private living area, with bedrooms, two studies and a library and the other contains the kitchen, dining room and lounge.

Part of Kruger's design style is to create a village – in this case a studio, staff quarters and stables – on the slopes of the mountain. Cruise likes how the buildings intersect. Her favourite place is her studio and the library. "Without my studio, I'm never whole. In the morning I open my eyes, stumble out of bed before light and go for a swim. The moon is setting and the stars still shining. As I do my laps I meditate. I then go for a ride and I'm ready to start my day in the studio".

She is creating her next work in the series of her interpretation of Alice in Wonderland. "When Alice goes down the rabbit hole, she enters a dreamlike world where the animals talk. Humankind needs to listen to the animals more or else we're headed for disaster".

John's favourite spot is the outside shower. "It's amazing being able to look up at the mountain." He also loves the gallery. "Martin had showed us a home where the entrance hall had this type of tunnel. It was my idea to extend it all the way through and use it as a gallery."

Kruger described the project as "an amazing experience". "It was like a journey of determining what the place wanted to become... how it responded to the mountain and the forest. The farmstead has the quality of a village. The architecture is understated but extremely powerful."

He said the project had its fair share of challenges, including convincing *De Goede Hoop Estate's* design review committee of this particular approach to Cape buildings. During construction an underground river was discovered and the house had to be moved 25 metres. But in the end architect and clients agree the result was worth the sleepless nights.

Cruise described working with Kruger as "a lovely creative high... because of his generosity of spirit he allowed me to get involved". She said: "In Joburg you work hard so you can travel. Here I hardly want to leave, not even to go over the mountain."