



When Simmy and Vanessa Peerutin returned to South Africa 20 years ago they fell in love with the Cape Town suburb of Higgovale. Set on the slopes of Table Mountain, the quiet, forested neighbourhood is minutes from the city centre and beaches, and yet worlds apart. Vanessa walked the upper streets knocking on doors and waiting for the right opportunity. When an estate agent phoned asking if the couple might be interested in a corner plot about to go on the market, they signed their offer before even setting foot on the property.

At the time it held what had been a labourer's cottage and an unfortunate 1950s addition with few architectural pretensions. But with Simmy being one half of Peerutin Architects (in partnership with his brother, David – see Heads Up on page 48), this was never going to be an issue. What is not surprising is that a fresh wave of renovations has accompanied each new addition to their family. What is surprising, however, is the style of the now completed home.

Most of the designs for which the firm is renowned lean towards a minimalist aesthetic: they are clean lined, even modular. This home's exterior – its 'final renovation' completed in just three months – is located somewhere in the Cape vernacular.

A family home first and foremost, the dwelling has something of a farmhouse feel, but that perception is perhaps due more to the generosity of its proportions. 'Rustic' it most definitely is not. The large sash windows have stainless-steel fittings where you might expect brass, and there's a sleek Scandinavian-style fireplace where there might have been an embellished Victorian variety. There are shutters, Doric pillars, and a *rietdak* veranda, but all chosen for practical purposes or personal preference rather than any slavish adherence to Colonial backward-glances.

Simmy picked sash windows quite simply because they're the best design: you can open the top or bottom, partially or completely. ▷

