





# Into the *blue*

By Lynne Yates

By drawing on the ocean as inspiration and expertly manipulating space and light, Franziska Luke of sisco.architects has converted a 1950s two-bedroom apartment in Sea Point into a spacious and contemporary three-bedroom home

**Q** On the promenade overlooking the ocean in Sea Point, one of Cape Town's trendiest suburbs, is an apartment whose light and spacious design has transformed it from a lacklustre 1950s flat into a modern space exuding elegance and sophistication. This recently redesigned apartment embodies the chic affluence of Sea Point, which was once a small seaside resort on the outskirts of the Mother City, but is now home to private mansions and luxury apartment blocks.

Franziska Luke of sisco.architects was given the considerable task of transforming this 115m<sup>2</sup>, two-bedroom, one-bathroom private home with 25m<sup>2</sup> of balcony area into a light, airy and contemporary three-bedroom, two-bathroom apartment. Located on the sixth floor of an eight-storey apartment block built in the 1950s and partly refurbished in the 1970s, this sea-facing apartment occupies prime space in this much sought-after suburb.

Cape Town based sisco.architects was established in 2007 by Luke. After working as an architect in Kirchheim and Cologne, Germany for several years, Luke decided to move to Cape Town where she worked for various local firms. Today sisco.architects practises in residential and commercial projects as well as landscape design. The team is a mix of European and South African architects and interior designers, who follow a modern and minimalist approach in all aspects of their architectural and interior design work.

*TOP LEFT: Luke used the ocean as inspiration for the design and combined light colours with various shades of blue throughout the apartment.*

*FAR LEFT: The custom-made glass mosaic in the bathrooms is uniquely designed to change from dark at the bottom to lighter towards the top, making the ceiling appear higher and the space larger.*

*LEFT: Although the design relies primarily on natural light, Luke used artificial lighting to define the various areas and give each a unique character.*

# interior project

sea point apartment

*BELOW: In the dining area, a low floating ceiling panel disguises an awkward structural beam and houses 'star lights' and downlighters which provide light without obstructing the view of the ocean.*

*RIGHT: The use of light tiles throughout the space creates a sense of flow, while the generous use of glass brings the outdoors in.*

*FAR RIGHT: The minimalist open plan design by sisco.architects gives this apartment a chic, fresh feel, and the use of cool, light colours and tiles negates the need for air conditioning.*



*LEFT: Contemporary furnishings in a combination of white, chrome and wood finishes give the apartment a cool, uncluttered feel.*

*ABOVE: Blue glass mosaic tiles and glass dividers in the bathrooms cleverly create the effect of a flow between indoors and out by bringing the feel of the ocean into the apartment.*

The initial challenge facing Luke and her team – Carmen Leimer and Catharina Konnertz – was that, on the one hand, the client wanted to maximise the use of the space and include an additional bedroom and bathroom, but on the other, he desired a light and open feel that precluded tiny rooms and many walls. In addition, as the apartment overlooks the sea, he wanted the design to bring the ocean indoors.

“The obvious solution was to strip the old apartment completely, allowing only structural elements, such as columns and beams, to remain,” says Luke. The original design was fairly restricting as it featured

very low beams and Luke and her team also had to leave in place the existing services which run through the building. Luke explains how she overcame the first hurdle, which was to make more space; “We created an open plan kitchen, living and dining area and moved the entrance in order to gain some space for an additional en suite bathroom and the third bedroom.” Two curved walls create flow through the apartment – the first is situated at the entrance and draws you into the apartment on arrival, while the other is a feature wall between the new bedroom and the dining area that serves the purpose of guiding you into the dining area and softening the division between the two spaces.



To bring in extra light, more windows and large glass folding doors were included in the design. The use of additional glass inside the apartment and having almost no corridors in the layout and a light colour scheme also contribute to this effect. "Light is very important in any area – we always try to avoid having only artificially lit rooms, even if it's a bathroom. However, the artificial lighting design does play a big part in the design process – we use it to try and define areas and create a different character for the relevant spaces," says Luke.

### Keep it simple

With the shell of the apartment in place, Luke was able to concentrate on the interior design. "Our intention was for the design to be very minimalistic to create a sense of space and peace. In order for it to have a strong relation to its location, the design needed to be light, open, minimal, cool and fresh, yet elegant. I feel that spaces are often over-decorated and this results in them losing their character – perhaps that's because I am mainly an architect/interior designer and not really a decorator," she explains.

Using the ocean as inspiration, Luke combined light colours with various shades of blue. Blue glass mosaic tiles in the kitchen area and inside the bathrooms cleverly create the effect of a flow between indoors and out, by bringing the feel of the ocean into the apartment. Light floor tiles run throughout the open plan kitchen, dining and living area, while in the bedrooms original timber flooring, which has been sanded and sealed, present a dark contrast while still giving a fresh, modern feel. Contemporary furnishings in a combination of white, chrome and wood finishes add to the cool, uncluttered feel.

### Tricks of the trade

"In this design, several obstacles had to be overcome, and for each we sought individual solutions to reach the envisioned result," explains Luke. For example, an awkward structural beam above the dining area in the open plan living space presented a disruption to the flow of the design. Here, Luke created a low floating ceiling panel to define the dining area and hide the beam. "A feature pendant wasn't an option as the ceiling was so low due to the beam, and it would also conflict with the view of the ocean, so we added 'star lights' and downlighters into the ceiling panel, which is also lit from inside at night," she explains. Another difficulty was the low ceiling height in the main ensuite bathroom due to the existing beams. Here, the solution was the custom-designed glass mosaic with a transition between dark at the bottom and lighter towards the top, making the ceiling appear higher and the space larger.

The impact of the design on the environment was also taken into consideration, with the inclusion of water-saving technology in the bathrooms and the omission of an air-conditioning system as the many tiles and light colours contribute towards a cooler atmosphere.

"This was a great project to work on from beginning to end, with our client giving us lots of freedom with the design. Once the design phase was completed, the project took eight months to complete, and the result is an apartment that makes maximum use of its space through its minimalist design and decoration," concludes Luke. 