



# cape grace

IN HIS COUNTRY HOME, GREG MELLOR HAS COMBINED INHERITED ANTIQUES, NATURAL TEXTURES AND TIMELESS TEXTILES FOR A CHARMING BLEND OF RUSTIC ROMANCE AND CLASSIC CAPE

TEXT JULIA FREEMANTLE PRODUCTION DEAN VAN ASWEGEN PHOTOGRAPHS KARL ROGERS

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The mountain's mood changes with the light; a table setting on the verandah; the living room's hearth warms the entire space, while slipcovered sofas offer relaxed comfort; the renovated version of Greg Mellor's Barrydale home features salvaged doors and an open-plan layout

**b**arrydale roughly marks the end of the Overberg and the start of the Karoo. As an 'on-the-border' sort of place it conforms, really, to neither. The landscape is a merger of the low-lying scrub of the Karoo and the mountains you'd find further south – slightly less dramatic but no less picturesque, it has the best of both.

The area has always held charm for designer Greg Mellor and, after years of visiting the area and then working on a dream house project nearby, he built his own. As a weekend getaway for himself

and partner Hector Meyer, an attorney, it has fulfilled a long-awaited fantasy. 'While I was living in Australia I always dreamed of having a little house in the Karoo and when I pictured it, it was always in that valley,' says Greg.

Although its position is ideal, when Greg found the house it needed work. Alterations over the years meant it no longer had a clear identity and, on a more basic level, the small internal rooms didn't suit the couple's lifestyle. 'It had lost its patina and personality,' comments Greg. The first thing that he and his builder Peter Windvogel did was remove the front gable

and reconstruct it to match the other one – a Cape Dutch revival attempt in the 1930s or '40s had resulted in an incongruously elaborate façade on one side. Then, after he and Peter demolished all the interior walls and a poky enclosed verandah to create one large living space, and added two bedrooms and a bathroom onto one end, he went about sourcing old doors and windows. What he couldn't find he had made up.

More of a supersized cottage than a country manor, it refers obliquely to the earlier, simpler versions of Cape Dutch architecture (Greg always makes a point of contextualising a home in its surrounds) ▶

*Comfort is important, so is composition.  
But neither ever at the expense of the other*



A wooden dresser painted yellow inside from Dominic Touwen offers a rare splash of colour. The tub chair is from Classic Revivals OPPOSITE PAGE Hector Meyer and Greg Mellor in the kitchen with their three dogs, rough collies Liza and Luke and rescue puppy Alfie. Gregor Jenkin made the kitchen island for the couple and the pendant lights were brought back from Sydney





In the main bedroom, Alfie lies on the bed, which was made by Jean du Preez. A corner fireplace is a winter essential

## Country 101

Greg has combined key elements in his Barrydale home to achieve this low-key look

**Rustic freestanding furniture** Mismatched pieces, most of them made of wood, in different shapes and sizes – some pretty, some chunky – give the space an informal feel.

**Classic timeless textiles** Greg has stuck to tried-and-trusted textiles in this aspect of the decorating – paisleys, ticking stripes and florals. These timeless patterns give the house a sense of restrained romance to offset the rustic finishes.

**Metalcork decor details** From a bathroom's twin tin tubs to the custom-made iron four poster in the master bedroom, or the charming painted pendants in the kitchen, metalwork details root the house in its rustic surrounds.

**Woven natural textures** Woven pieces in natural fibres are used throughout – decorative or storage baskets, sisal rugs, raffia lampshades. They reference the setting and provide a visual link to the spanse riet roofing.

OPPOSITE  
CLOCKWISE FROM  
TOP LEFT Rustic  
tubs in one of the  
bathrooms get the full  
benefit of the sun; a  
table detail in the main  
bedroom; the built-in  
cement vanity has  
a curtain to conceal  
bathing paraphernalia;  
in the second bedroom,  
a moss-green fringed  
armchair stands in  
front of a chocolate-  
brown wardrobe

by way of its simple U-shape, gables and shutters. But, like its surrounds, it's a bit of a hybrid of styles, with Greg's diverse decor influences all playing a role.

The designer, who spent seven years living in Australia, has become known for his understated approach, and a blend of European, South African and American influences – both traditional and contemporary – pepper the interiors to give his style a look that's timeless. The antithesis of formality, it does however always have just the right ratio of classic elements to keep it from being too casual. Comfort is important, so is composition.

But neither ever at the expense of the other. Here in his Barrydale home, he gets the balance of Cape Dutch austerity and classic country prettiness just right, with his collection of one-off antiques and rustic finishes coming together in a perfect hybrid of Cape and Karoo.

In the home things are slightly worn, but in a charming way, with roughly plastered walls, aged rugs and faded fabrics all giving the comforting impression of establishment – the imperfection implying character and personality.

The palette of white walls and wooden freestanding furniture is punctuated by



warmer notes, mostly via textiles. But it's predominantly neutral. 'You can never have too many white platters,' comments Greg, as if in agreement, on his collection which is stacked on open shelving in the kitchen.

A soft sage green, however, forms a secondary theme, appearing on shutters and the occasional light fitting or fabric, no doubt a nod to the myriad greens of the surrounding landscape. Because as much as the indoor spaces invite relaxation, it's the outdoors which set a country home apart and this is no exception, with two separate areas that offer opportunities for reflection, sundowners, even an afternoon nap. One

area, at the front of the house leading onto a low-wall-surrounded lawn, is made up of built-in seating, vintage loungers, and lots of cushions. Round the side of the house, under a canopy of bamboo latte, is the outdoor dining area, complete with braai, nearby pool and herb garden.

The garden is still in its infancy but the beginnings of a colourful mix of indigenous shrubs and succulents seem set to establish the building further into its setting and here Greg will no doubt wield the same subtlety and sense of rightness as he has inside.

■ Gregory Mellor Interiors ☎ 021 424 0461; [www.gregorymellor.com](http://www.gregorymellor.com)