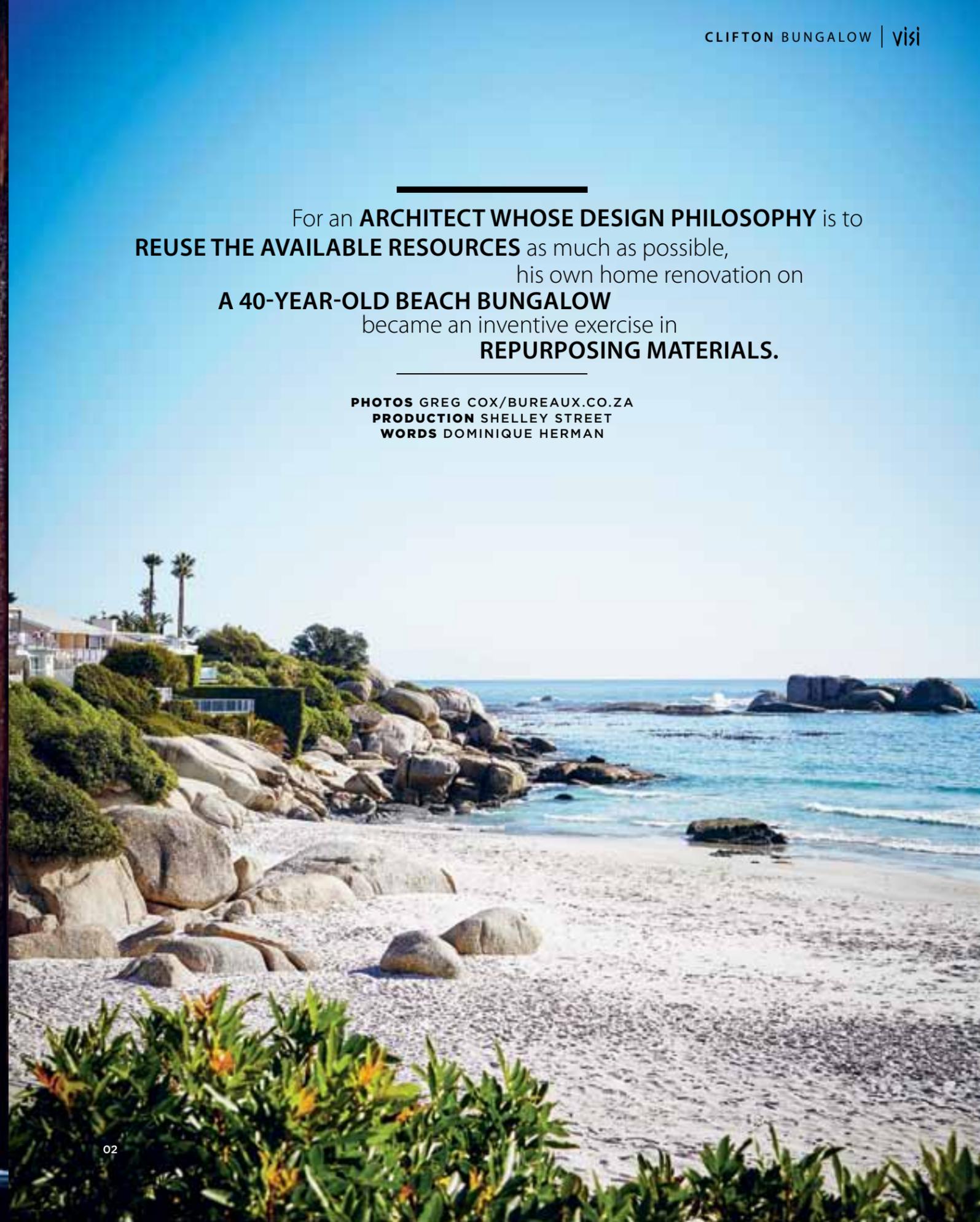

For an **ARCHITECT WHOSE DESIGN PHILOSOPHY** is to **REUSE THE AVAILABLE RESOURCES** as much as possible, his own home renovation on **A 40-YEAR-OLD BEACH BUNGALOW** became an inventive exercise in **REPURPOSING MATERIALS.**

PHOTOS GREG COX/BUREAUX.CO.ZA
PRODUCTION SHELLEY STREET
WORDS DOMINIQUE HERMAN

Weathered beauty





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Clifton Fourth Beach on Cape Town's Atlantic Seaboard is one of the country's most desirable spots, as evidenced in the summer months when South Africans and foreign tourists flock to it.

For Leon and Jann Saven and their daughter Gabriella, who live in one of the oldest bungalows on the beach, it's not just a summertime romance. The couple moved in 12 years ago after an extended stint in California. And for Jann, who grew up in this house, it was a double dose of coming home.

Leon, an architect with his own practice in Cape Town, says they put their own stamp on the house. The budget didn't allow them to demolish the structure and start again from scratch. Instead, he worked with the original main frame of the house – the roof and the posts and beams creating a rectilinear matchbox skeleton from which they scooped everything out. But nothing was thrown away. Most of the original materials – especially the old timber framing, doors, doorframes and panelling – were brought back into the house and used in a different form.

This approach to design is integral to Leon's architectural philosophy and one that he endeavours to bring to each project he works on. For example, old electrical distribution boards were salvaged from a building site and upcycled into a wall of cupboards in the living room; and cupboard units that Leon designed 10 years before were turned into a bathroom vanity. The mahogany exterior cladding from before was taken into the interior, sanded-down teak doors were installed in new places, and even the old timber staircase was reused in a new position.

The I-beams in the living room and aluminium window frames in the kitchen were painted a dark navy to bring the colour and feel of the sea inside the house. Blue stone tiles in the kitchen and bathroom continue that stormy sea aesthetic: Leon and Jann decided to use them with the underside facing up, not the slick side. The same tile was also used for the vanity tops in the bathroom on two butcher-block-style cabinets.

One of the most striking features of the house is the symphony of wood – about



02

a dozen different species have been used. It was too limiting and cost-prohibitive to use one wood everywhere.

While working in the United States, Leon became interested in wood used for exterior cladding such as Californian redwood and Western red cedar, which are popular on the west coast. He found out to his delight that these are some of the most inexpensive woods available in South Africa. These woods, also very light and robust, can withstand beetle rot, weather and water, making them excellent for outdoor use. Added to these woods in the house are teak doors and doorframes, ash, kiaat, beech, spruce and African rosewood.

"A lot of architects, including myself, would want to do projects where you're dealing with one wood throughout and it's really pristine and beautiful. But I believe that woods can live together and be in harmony, just like different trees grow together in a forest," he says.

Most of the wood was left raw, bar the floors and some of the pine panelling left over from a few building sites and used extensively. Downstairs, some of the pine-clad walls are

painted and the ash floors are treated with a simple water-based product.

"Wood is a great insulator," says Leon. "There aren't major temperature changes inside, as the wood doesn't allow heat to escape, so the house stays warm in winter." ✓

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PREVIOUS SPREAD

01 A reclaimed porthole provides an apt nautical touch. The mahogany cladding used inside the house was the exterior cladding pre-renovation.

02 The view of Clifton's Fourth Beach from the Savens' bungalow.

THIS SPREAD

01 The bungalow was designed and built in the early '70s in the modern Dutch style of a simple box with a post-and-beam construction and a flat roof.

02 Leon, Gabriella and Jann on the area of the deck wrapped around the western side of the house, which is out of sight from the popular Fourth Beach.



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01 In the kitchen, reclaimed industrial-style steel-framed windows let in the light and afford views of fynbos, big granite boulders, and a new herb and vegetable garden in the yard on the mountain side of the house. The EuroAir extractor hood from EuroAfrican and the bar stools, which Leon designed, bring in stainless steel accents.

02 Leon also designed the stainless-steel-topped kitchen cupboards.

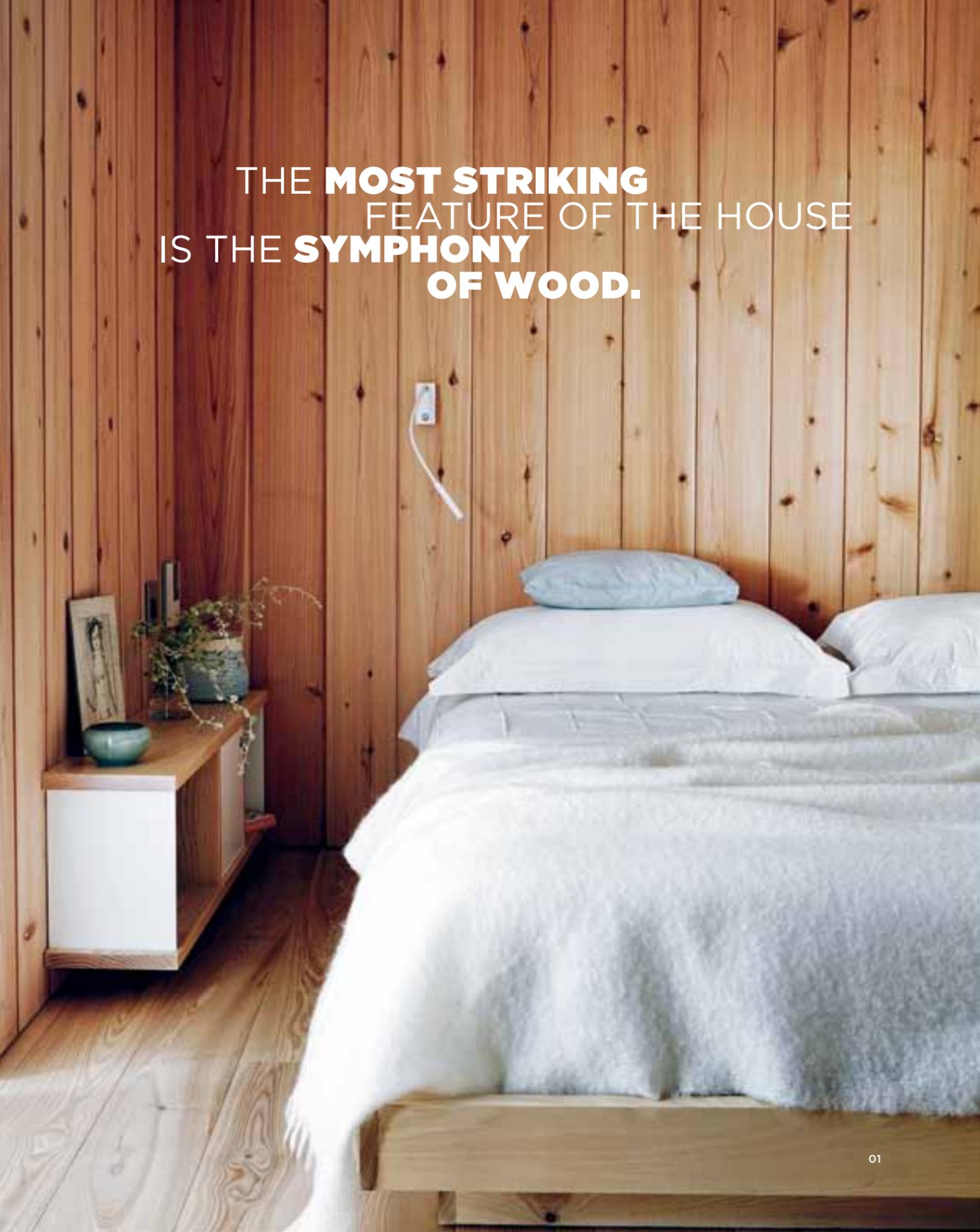
03 At night, when the television is on and a fire is blazing in the Godin fireplace, that's all one can see against the backing of black mild steel. The I-beams were painted a dark navy blue to bring the colour and feel of the sea inside. The lamp is from Innovation and the sofas were designed by Leon and made by Jo Carlin. Leon is the one who plays the drums.



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THE **MOST STRIKING**
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- 01** The master bedroom is clad in raw Japanese cedar, which has an aromatic fragrance and creates a soft finish. Cupboard handles are disguised in the cladding.
- 02** The master bathroom features Japanese cedar cladding, spruce and blue granite tiles.
- 03** The dining area, living areas and bedrooms face north, looking out to the Atlantic Ocean and the beach. "It's a very simple diagram," says Leon, "and that was always the diagram I wanted for the house: a living space in the centre and the bedrooms flanking it on either end. Bedrooms don't have to be that big in my opinion, but they do need to reflect our values and aspirations... they need to be our inner sanctums."
- 04** Leon designed most of the wooden furniture in the house, as he does for most of his projects. Blue granite tiles were used on the floor of the study.



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01 Pre-renovation, there wasn't a great connection to the outdoors – the deck was no deeper than 1,2 m. The current deck is the "interface" between the house, the beach and the sea. The retractable awning was made by Elliot Awnings.

We love!