



Clockwise, from Top Left The guesthouse has a glass box kitchen surrounded by indigenous herbaceous plants; A bird's eye view over the extensive formal kitchen garden that celebrates the famous Company's Garden of Cape Town; The lake on the farm is home to many species of birds and is often used by hotel guests for boating; Stone and lime washed 18th century entrance to the farmhouse is flanked by planters made of restored wooden slats



The Whole Wine Yards

Former editor of ELLE DECORATION South Africa, Karen Roos' inspired restoration of an old estate, is a creation of a new kind of country getaway – a working farm that is also a luxury hotel

TEXT BY **RISHA MERCHANT** PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY **BABYLONSTOREN**

The end of her journey in the media world gave birth to Karen's new beginnings at Babylonstoren. "This project became a full time way of life," she claims with pride. "We saw this beautiful old farm by chance and got swept away." Located in the historic vineyard in Franschhoek valley, just outside Cape Town, this handsome 590 acre property with its many layers of history remains a working farm, but it has also been imagined into a unique country hideaway. Reinstating one of the wineland's oldest properties inspired Karen to envision not just a lavish recreation of time past, but rather an evocation: Skillful restoration infused with the 21st century life. She states, "The purity of farm buildings built in 1777 dictated a look which we extended – a well-proportioned, simple, whitewashed structure. The green pastures were inspired by the Company's Garden of Cape Town established in the 17th century by the Dutch East India Company, to supply fresh veggies and fruits to the sailing ships of the Spice Trade between India and Europe. We had fun punning on the mythical Hanging Gardens of Babylon, referenced by the farm's 1692 name – Babylonstoren meaning Tower of Babel."

GETAWAY CAPE TOWN



Clockwise, from Top Left The guest suite bathroom in warm whites: Metro wall tiles and antique stone floor tiles from Onsite, Cape Town and Vieques bath from Agape by Patricia Urquiola; View of the living area overlooking the garden. The couches and chaise lounge are from Driade, Small Nothing sofa by Philippe Starck from Driade, pouffes from a craft market and chairs from Weylandts, Cape Town. The Tolomeo Mega Terra lamp by Artemide and MDF Italia Baobab coat rack by Xavier Lust lend a chic vibe; The Ducoed wooden four poster Ibiza bed from Weylandts, Cape Town, Flos floor lamps by Philippe Starck, the straw and wood low seater from Design Afrika and plant artwork from Artefact, Cape Town, create a warm retreat; In the studio cottage, The Tree from Swedese, rattan umbrella holder from a craft market and Steelwood chairs and cafe table from Magis, stand above the Corcolem flooring



Clockwise, from Top Left The Greenhouse restaurant in the glass and steel conservatory, is decked with aluminium furniture from the Luxembourg range by Fermob; The Puff Adder, a sinuous shaded walk built using Balau slats and a steel spine. It slithers through trees on the edge of the kitchen garden, where indigenous clivia lilies and berries grow in abundance; A part of the conservatory where light lunches, drinks and teas are served on the Fermob table and bench from its 1900 range Right, from Left In the garden, the salvaged tap from an old wine vat pours water on the Table Mountain granite sink; Interiors of the Babel restaurant with the table from Kartell and chairs from the Luxembourg range by Fermob. The vintage cut glass bowl with the homegrown Cavolo Nero makes for a unique centrepiece

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The gabled barn in the forecourt has been transformed into an all white multipurpose studio with a sprung floor. Among the old oaks and olives, a series of landhuisies (cottages) have been built to accommodate guests. There are 14 suites, seven of which have their own kitchens. Slotted into one wall of each suite, a spacious glass box contains a dining and cooking area, with expansive views overlooking the garden or the trees. The 18th century styled cottages have a mix of antique pieces with ultra modern accessories from brands like Magis, Kartell and Triade. The touches are clearly Karen's, her design sensibilities credited to her foreign trips. “Luckily I had the chance to travel widely, both before and during my time with ELLE DECORATION. Travel taught me about the importance of comfort in a space, while the magazine helped me understand how timeless good design can be.”

The eight acre garden features fruits and vegetables, indigenous flora, fragrant lawns of herbs and “more than 300 varieties of edible plants”. There are two places to wine and dine: The Greenhouse, a custom-built conservatory where scrumptious snacks are served amidst the greenery and Babel, an old cowshed converted into the main dining zone, where Maranda Engelbrecht, award winning stylist and food consultant has come up with unique fuss free dishes from the acreage's fresh produce. Asked about her favourite nook, Karen concludes, “Probably The Greenhouse, where one can merge with the plants while enjoying a salad or a glass of Mourvedre Rose”. ♦