

star home



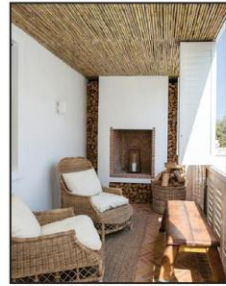
Detail in one of the bathrooms.



A stylish outdoor area for hotel guests to relax.



The Franschoek hotel's outdoor eating area.



A balcony for quiet moments.

MID-CENTURY MARVELS

A heritage building in Franschoek has been transformed into a boutique hotel filled with hand-picked items

By Bianca Coleman

AKADEMIE Street Boutique Hotel offers a luxurious hideaway in the heart of Franschoek. The award-winning five-star accommodation has five individually styled suites and three guest cottages. From its original "Oortuisings" Heritage building dating to 1860, Akademie Street Hotel has been reincarnated from its historic single-storey white structure to become a design lover's dream with Cape Dutch inspired buildings, scattered with antiques and collectibles from around the world showcasing the individual style and inspiration of owner Paul Kinney. **What was the inspiration for the decor, style and design?** I've been travelling for more than

30 years, staying in hotels of all shapes, sizes and locations. A lot of time was spent in London, Sicily, New York and Hong Kong. I lived in a hotel in Tokyo for an entire year. I know what works well and what doesn't. This exposure drove me to thinking I could create my own hotel, where I could put in to practice everything I learned from many years as a paying guest. This was the genesis of Akademie Street. Having purchased the property in 2014, I set out about implementing many of the architectural, design and service ideas I had bookmarked over time. In the early days, these were captured in binders with photos from magazines, but they became Pinterest boards, covering almost every aspect of my intended hotel, from paints to pastries. My overriding design influence

was, and is, mid-century, particularly the 1950s and 1960s. I love this design period. It is packed with strong, curvaceous shapes and materials which had never been used in furniture making. All these items were made to exacting standards, with a combination of craftsmanship and functionality. Italian, Danish and eastern European furniture makers excelled. On visiting the property, you will find a unique collection of items from some of the most famous mid-century designers, like barware from Aldo Turo made from parchment and dyed goatskin; rattan and iron dining chairs from Gian Franco Legler, used at the hotel for serving breakfast; and bent beech wood armchairs designed by Jindrich Halabala, placed by the wood burning stoves in each bedroom suite. I spent almost two years curating

pieces, sourcing them from dealers and private owners throughout the world, as far apart as Canada, Russia, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Netherlands, Holland and Austria. All pieces were shipped to a central warehouse in Europe, before being repacked and sent to their new home in Franschoek. It was an enormous task. **How do you think your guests will relate to the surroundings you have created?** One amazing thing about the boutique hotel business is that you have direct contact with guests, and you get to know them well. I deliberately sought pieces of furniture that bring stories that excite and inspire guests. Our grand piano was bought in 1929 by a wealthy South African family visiting England for the first time. I bought it in South Africa along with all the supporting

pieces of history, including the train ticket used by the family to visit London from Oxford, where they were staying, the showroom brochure from which they selected the piano, and the original key to lock the keyboard. I arranged for it to be fully and sympathetically restored to its former glory. It now sits in our main guest lounge, and is played by our resident pianist. Its sounds fabulous, just like I assume it did back in 1929. **What advice would you offer readers who want to recreate a similar style in their own homes?** Don't be afraid to take risks with your design and decor. While it's okay to take inspiration from elsewhere, try to curate your own unique style by combining pieces from different eras. As long as it is done sympathetically, the results will be amazing.



One of the rooms in Akademie Street Boutique Hotel. PICTURES: SUPPLIED