

# A Work of Art

A new private holiday rental company is opening up the homes of South Africa's top creatives and art collectors

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It's not for everyone," laughs travel expert and former magazine editor Michelle Snaddon, gazing upon the mélange of taxidermy and animal skin rugs draped around Brenaissance manor house. The arresting homestead in the Cape Winelands is the latest addition to Art House Collection, a boutique portfolio of design-led private homes for rent. Not for everyone, indeed, but for someone: a trait that makes the collection so exclusive. "At the end of the day, they're lived-in homes," she explains.

Art House Collection is a new offshoot from luxury international villa rental company In Residence, facilitating the homes of architects, magazine editors, interior designers, stylists, photographers and artists to double as stylish and unique holiday stays. "In Residence villas in Cape Town are typically larger, striking architectural properties on the Atlantic Seaboard, not the more relaxed beach bungalow or family-friendly manor house on a wine farm," explains co-founder Elana Brundyn, former director of Norval art foundation who founded the company alongside Snaddon, a travel expert with a background in South Africa's most beautiful lifestyle magazines. "They complement the existing In Residence collection, but with a unique and interesting art, design and creative focus," she says.

"We aim to have a smaller portfolio of properties that genuinely have a story to tell, either through their compelling art or simply because they're homes curated

the 12-metre pool and manicured hedged garden. A master suite, decked in soft greys and whites with fur rugs and a marble roll-top bath, opens up onto expansive green space. "For the nannies, the chauffeurs, the pilots, the drivers, there are cottages on the farm itself, which is just a short walk through the orchards," explains Snaddon.

Guests can use Brenaissance, and Art House Collection's roster of sumptuous homesteads, as if it was their own. Housekeepers, security teams and the occasional pet come with the properties on its freshly printed books; they include a quirky two-sleeper apartment in Bantry Bay, a historic manor house in Cape Town centre, eco-lodges in the Sabi Sands Game Reserve and farmhouses in neighbouring wine estates like Johannesburg and Delaire Graff. "In one of the apartments, the owner is a collector of note; when you walk in you can tell she's been a stylist all her life – there's a collection of tea strainers and ceramics," laughs Snaddon. "We've just taken another quirky space which is full of tapestry cushions. The one stand-out feature of all these homes is everyone is doing their own thing."

Extras like slippers and gowns can be requested, along with experiences focusing on food, art and culture curated using Snaddon and Brundyn's local connections. "We can co-ordinate anything. Elana is going to do curated art tours and we've just done a costing on a Norval, Steenberg and back then helicopter to Boschendal and drive back to the

## "THEY'RE CHARACTERFUL, LOVED AND LIVED-IN. EACH ART HOUSE 'SPEAKS' TO US FOR DIFFERENT REASONS"

by owners who display their sometimes quirky collections with such distinct style that travellers come to us if they want to discover the extraordinary," explains Brundyn. "They're characterful, loved and lived-in. Each art house 'speaks' to us for a different reason. Sometimes we look at location: Stellenbosch, for example, is humming with new restaurants and galleries and the Stellenbosch Triennale 2024 has just been confirmed."

Few have a more distinct style than Brenaissance, a four-bedroom home for rent near Stellenbosch. At the heart is a soaring dining and living room with lofty charcoal walls softened by off-white linen pendant lighting and plush white sofas around a fireplace. A solid wood 12-seat dining table dominates the space decorated with giant test tube vases and the walls are lined with a collection of massive fossil reliefs by South African artist Toby Megaw; a frog, prehistoric bird, ostrich and giraffe. This central core leads into a handful of other living and dining spaces including a welcoming farmhouse kitchen, where Denzil Herring still life paintings reminiscent of the Dutch Golden Age balance above marble countertops and a modern version of an AGA Oven.

But the most striking of Brenaissance's art is, arguably, the collection of 10 photograph-like pencil and pastel portraits of South African women, commissioned from Greg Lourens. That, or Megaw's sculpture of a baby's hand clenching onto a father's thumb that draws the eye across

Waterfront," reveals Snaddon. "There's nothing standard about them and they're always bespoke".

Renowned private chef Nicola Spilsbury, whose clients include A-list international celebrities, can pop by Brenaissance, or any of Art House's residences, to cook up an exquisite tasting menu; Brenaissance's walk-in fridges, second mini kitchen and charming front terrace with endless views onto the patchwork of vineyards make in-house dining both a breeze and a delight.

"Because we're a sister company to In Residence, we can rely on their infrastructure and on what's known as the In Residence Difference, a concierge service that's available for VIP clients, if required," Brundyn explains. A pre-arrival preference sheet is also delivered, asking everything from guests' desired milk and bread to favourite fruits – of which there are no shortage of options. "Dietary requirements help us choose which private chef to book – this level of detail doesn't happen with every villa company," adds Snaddon.

Expansion into safaris is next for the duo, Snaddon's background in the most beautiful of safari destinations playing a helping hand. "I don't do the ordinary ones – these are private safari homes," she insists. "I'm going to do small lodges that you can book exclusively." If In Residence's global presence is anything to go by, Art House Collection's books could soon feature properties in Europe and the Americas. So, as Brundyn teases, "watch this space." 

Opposite, clockwise from top left: Brenaissance's commanding position in the Devon Valley; the lofty main living and dining area; the master bedroom; Denzil Herring still lifes hang above the modern AGA. Previous pages: Toby Megaw's sculpture sits at the end of the garden; one of Greg Lourens' pencil and pastel portraits