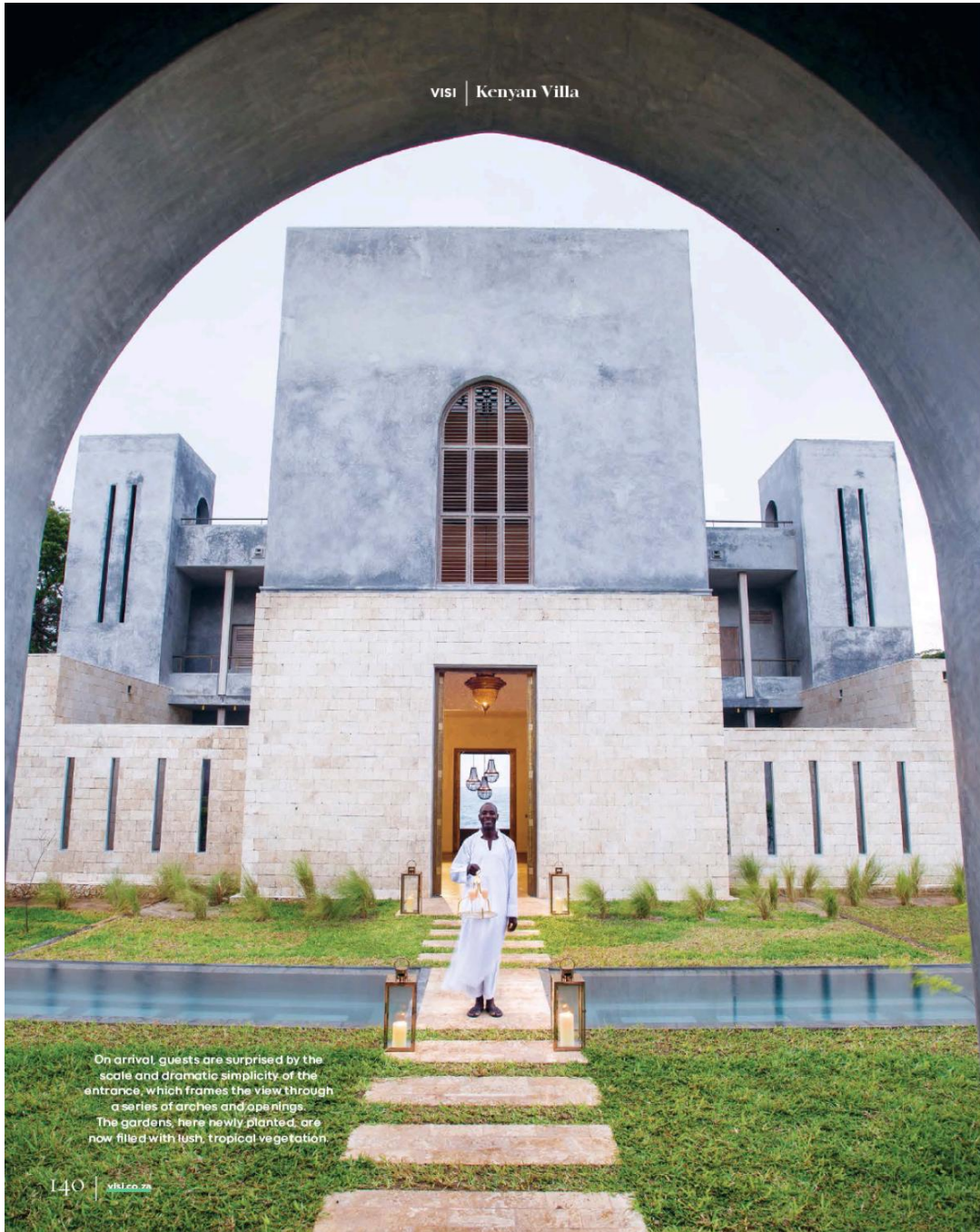


visi | Kenyan Villa

# S A N D C A S T L E

Characterised by classic forms and strict proportions, this beautiful Swahili-styled villa on the **KILFI** coast is a study in symmetry.

PHOTOS DOOK | PRODUCTION ANNEMARIE MEINTJES | WORDS BIDDI RORKE



On arrival, guests are surprised by the scale and dramatic simplicity of the entrance, which frames the view through a series of arches and openings. The gardens, here newly planted, are now filled with lush, tropical vegetation.

# it's

an extraordinary stretch of land: six acres of Kilifi coastline on a clifftop overlooking Sirai Beach, thick with ancient baobabs and leading down to white sand so soft it squeaks beneath bare feet. At its centre, surrounded by landscaped tropical gardens, is a stately private home for a 12-strong blended family. The main building comprises a downstairs dining area and separate formal lounge, connected by a colossal, partially-covered outdoor seating area. This is topped by a palatial master suite, upstairs study and lounge. A series of interleading courtyards fans out from this central point, leading to sleeping quarters in two separate wings and affording the owners a voluminous yet cohesive living space. As architect Nick Plewman explains, the entire building is arranged around the central oversized, semi-outdoor sunken lounge that allows the family and guests to make the most of the temperate climate. "The main circulation moves out laterally from

there and a long colonnade runs through the site to connect the living areas." Material choices, informed by the vernacular use of coral stone, Lamu plaster and makuti thatch, allow this private residence to settle comfortably into its remarkable landscape. A key consideration of the build was harnessing the best of the two prevailing winds that circulate in the area. "The stately tower and vertical slits in the upper levels induce vertical air flow, drawing up the cooling monsoon during the hot season," explains Nick. These simple yet effective elements also make a suitable nod to the architectural style of the traditional Arabic stone houses found on nearby Lamu island. Another well-considered adoption of Arabic architecture lies in the use of brise-soleil screens that form a strong narrative throughout the home. These fretwork screens – made from a selection of brass, plastered concrete and timber – aren't just whimsical decoration. They're hardworking elements that allow for privacy and air flow. Exterior walls, plastered in natural lime,

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bound with egg white and polished with beeswax, offer a natural burnished lustre to the site. And this bleached-bone tone continues seamlessly inside where, sheltered from heat of the African sun, it's all about natural textures and raw linens, in a colour palette informed by the surrounding baobabs. "Artisanal pieces were sourced from Kenya, Morocco, India and South Africa, yet the home feels unmistakably Kenyan," says Chris Browne of Fox Browne Creative, tasked with the project. "The interiors are rooted in Swahili design that captures the languorous ambience of the coast." Tucked into an estuary leading to a creek, Kilifi is a lesser-visited stretch of the Kenyan coastline that has largely escaped the major developments that have changed the face of Mombasa. And this genteel home, with its well-proportioned arches and fortress-like demeanour, has the feeling of a natural and authentic addition to the landscape.



**ABOVE** The monastic arrival foyer features custom-made beaten brass doors as well as bespoke lighting from Marrakesh. The "Shark Boy" sculpture is part of the owner's private collection.  
**BELOW** The main veranda is where days are whiled away. Fabrics by Evolution change from day (muted greys) to night (dusty pinks) and the space awakens as night falls. Fox Browne Creative swinging chairs add a playful note to the space.



The outdoor dining veranda features a Fox Browne Creative table with built-in ice well for long, lazy lunches. In the evenings, the large basket lights reference local fishing baskets.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The beaten brass front doors from Marrakesh with custom-made handles by Ironwood Africa open into a quiet yet dramatic entrance hall. The owners' favourite artwork is highlighted by brass hanging lights from Marrakesh, and the walls have a Lamu plaster finish. The magnificent Indian Ocean view through an arched opening overlooking the main veranda. The arched veranda of the master suite creates a cool and private space to watch dhows sailing up and down the coast.

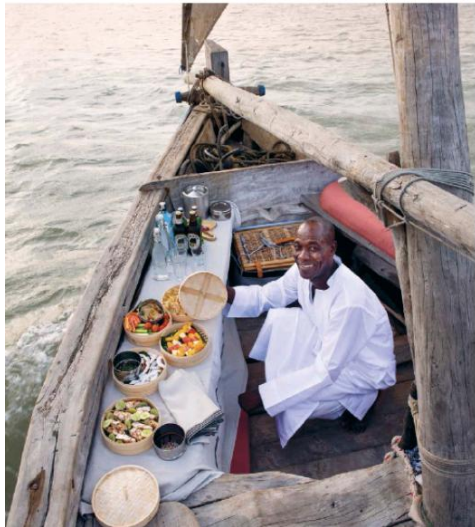


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**ABOVE** Every guest suite has its own rooftop hideaway, and the custom-designed breeze-soleil wall allows maximum airflow. The Kenneth Cobonpue chair is a nod to traditional basket craft integrated with modern technology.

**LEFT** Guests can enjoy sunset cruises in a traditional dhow along the Kilifi creek, where the mangroves create a serene backdrop.

**OPPOSITE** A coral stone shower takes centre stage in this bathroom, with a Lamu-plastered niche wall in the background.

**PREVIOUS PAGE ABOVE** An infinity pool, perfectly framed by the massive baobabs, takes the eye straight to the view – seamlessly merging the sea, pool and sky.

**PREVIOUS PAGE BELOW** Opposite the pool bar in the shade of the baobabs, a built-in oversized day bed accommodates whole families or large groups of friends to relax and enjoy perfect days on the coast.





**ABOVE** The hand-carved Moorish-inspired bed, framed by soft, romantic mosquito netting, is the hero of this guest suite. **BELOW** An oversized, built-in terrazzo bath anchors the guest suite bathroom, and large, shuttered doors give guests a sense of bathing at one with nature.



The upstairs sala on this suite features a suspended hanging bed for long, lazy, indulgent afternoons.  
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