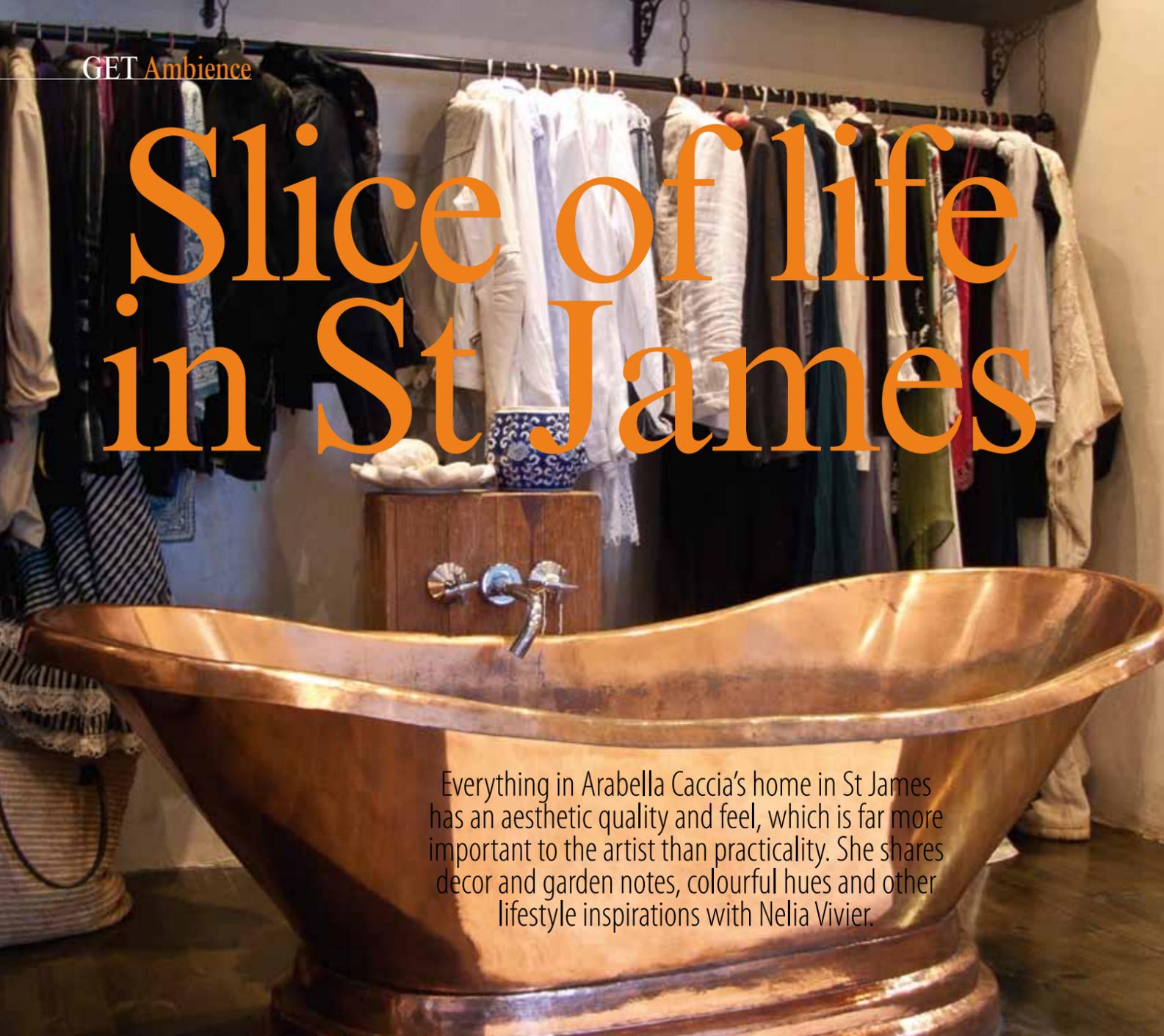


# Slice of life in St James



Everything in Arabella Caccia's home in St James has an aesthetic quality and feel, which is far more important to the artist than practicality. She shares decor and garden notes, colourful hues and other lifestyle inspirations with Nelia Vivier.

In her "secret home" in St James with a spectacular view over the bay from her bedroom, Arabella Caccia watches the sun come up over the water every morning. "Whales and dolphins play in the bay in front of the house and birds collect in their thousands to migrate, swarming in vast flocks from Strandfontein to Simon's Town. Navy ships cruise up and down and often the submarine can be spotted on patrol," she muses.

"Our home is an eclectic mix of pieces I love," she describes the decor and ambience. "Every item tells a story of its connection to our lives. My children often complain that our home is utterly,

irrationally organised. My answer is always, 'When they have their own houses, they can do things their way, and in their rooms they can arrange things as wish.'

Arabella concedes that they do have a point – champagne glasses sit next to baking dishes. Her clothes live in a beautiful 15th-century Italian chest in the lounge. "But it works for me," she says with a serene smile.

She loves scented candles and flowers in the house, planted some hyacinths and to her joy they've just flowered, producing the most heavenly scent. "They sit on the dining room table on a silver tray I found in a market in Marrakesh, alongside a stash of delicious sweets. My current

favourites are crystallised rose petals and violets I found on my recent travels in France.

Her studio is at home, as her children like her to be around, not too far away. It is in a double garage, with a window that has a spectacular view, framed between an olive tree and a loquat, of the whole bay. Its cement floor is covered with a huge Persian carpet that she found at an auction, and a large gilt mirror the size of a door.

There is one cupboard that holds over a 100 jars of pigment, from Indian yellow made from the crystallised urine of Hindu cattle fed on crocuses to Chinese vermilion, turquoise, cobalt and a lump

Photos by Nelia Vivier.



Champagne glasses sit next to baking dishes.

Her clothes live in a beautiful 15th-century

Italian chest in the lounge



of genuine red ochre mined locally and given to her by a friend some 15 years ago.

"There are several easels as you can see," she says, "a stool and a bed ... and music. I always listen to music in my studio, it varies depending on my mood, from Bach to Pink Floyd, Vaya con Dios to Florence and the Machine, Birdy and Rodriguez. My children always give me music compilations for my birthday of new music they think I will love.

"Making art is part of my life, but more importantly my life itself is an art," she says. "I love to cook, mostly Mediterranean food. We have a pizza oven, but I'm still mastering the art of the pizza. I learnt about baking bread in our local bakery C'est la Vie here in Kalk Bay – early in the morning, shaping baguettes and making croissants was like making little sculptures, which locals bought and ate, and then they were gone."

Outside in Arabella's small vegetable garden, a roaming porcupine loves her potatoes, rummages around, demolishing the baby vegetables. "He also seems to like the guavas which fall off the tree," she relates, "and does nocturnal battles with my dogs, rattling

two daughters. I worked in a remote but special church-like studio I built in the fynbos.

"My children visit their father on his farm in Hermanus as often as they can. They love it there, they are enormously privileged to have such a beautiful and special place in their lives. I hope in the next chapter of my life to live in the wilderness somewhere, a place more remote where the stars are even clearer at night and where one cannot help but be conscious of the cycle of the moon."

