

ICON

149

HOME

November 2015

NICE PIECE OF ASH

The shared office reaches maturity in Sydney, and now it's wood-panelled

TWO TIMERS

The enduring appeal (and perils) of making old brands new again

PAULA SCHER

The Pentagram director pits answering emails versus cigarettes



INTERNATIONAL DESIGN,
ARCHITECTURE & CULTURE

UK £5.00
EUR €9.99
USA \$15.99



PLUS

L.A. goes Dutch:
Life with the
“woonerf”

The lasting
appeal of
modernist
Essex

Maison&Objet:
How the French
sell “Home”

Get a grip!
In praise of the
door handle

Marjan van Aubel

puts the window to work
... very 21st century!



Unclutter

Even a small house in a suburb can feel spacious. With large windows, wide views and generous outdoor space, even the tiniest cabin can feel expansive. In inner-city contexts, such luxuries cannot be taken for granted, and designers are forced to look inwards, rather than outwards, to combat claustrophobia.

Not long ago, Specht Harpman, a New York- and Austin-based practice, renovated a cramped 40sq m Manhattan loft into a roomy micro-home. This seeming oxymoron was elegantly resolved by a multi-level configuration, as well as the optimisation of built-in storage space.

Taking these lessons to heart, designers and interior architects have designed a spate of successful micro home conversions that make such American precedents look positively opulent. Polish designer Szymon Hanczar

managed to convert a 13sq m room in Wrocław into a self-contained mini-loft, featuring a kitchen, bathroom and a mezzanine bed, with a ladder leading up to the platform to save precious space. Despite the integration of storage space, the available capacity is on the less generous side, and does not allow for any excess or extravagance. Living in a micro home becomes a conscious act, in which clutter needs to be kept out of sight, and even the amount of items owned must be reduced.

Going to such extremes offers new insights about our domestic conventions and necessities. It raises questions as to why free-plan and free-section designs, with ladders, sliding doors, built-in storage, fold-out furniture and a more rational, minimalist attitude to our possessions, have not yet become synonymous with inner-city living.