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ARCHITECTURE - INTERIOR - DECORATION - ART - DESIGN - TRAVEL - CARS - LIFESTYLE / **SPRING 2022** / BE-NL €16 / UK £14



MUD

RESIDENCE



Belgian designer Andy Kerstens recently completed MUD residence: a guesthouse and also a creative base where you not only draw inspiration from the house itself, but also from the green surroundings and other recreational facilities. It became a strong example of authentic architecture, where design, culture and a beautiful interior meet. We get to know the young designer and the residence he designed.



A young, enterprising designer with great ambition and a great sense of aesthetics. This is how Andy Kerstens describes himself, something that Imagicasa can only fully endorse. That he would go in the creative direction was already written in the stars. 'Already in primary school, I was quite creative. At that time, it was not necessarily my intention to become an architect, but during my secondary education in art school it became clear that this was the direction I would go,' Kerstens explains. He decided to study interior design, followed by a master's in interior architecture. 'During my studies, I worked for the architectural firm De Meester Vliegen for a year, and after graduating I immediately started working for Dieter Vander Velpen. I did that on a self-employed basis, so strictly speaking my own studio came into being at that time, although it was then mainly to work for other architectural firms, supplemented by a few small projects. Over the years, these grew into more full-fledged and larger projects, which eventually led to me deciding to go completely for my own studio at the end of 2019,' he says.

With this own practice, the designer focuses mainly on interior projects, although he also designs furniture pieces. 'That furniture actually started a bit on the sidelines. We started with the Rift collection, which was the result of just putting a few ideas on paper at the weekend. Through social media, that started to take on a life of its own,



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TACTILE DETAILS, ROUGH BUT REFINED FINISHES AND CONTRASTING TEXTURES

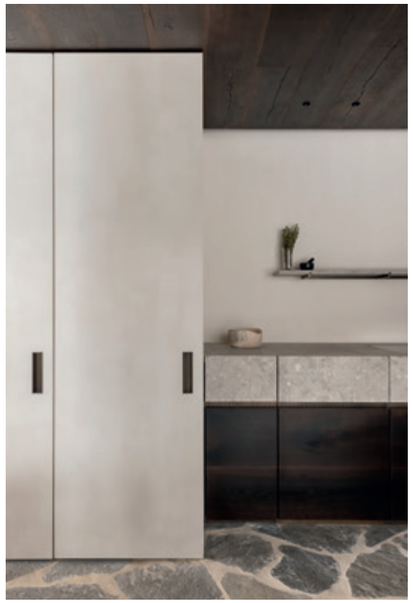
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so we decided to focus more on that. We then released the Rift table, with several new items to follow soon. We also designed the Yoma console, although that was a custom furniture design for a specific customer. So sometimes pieces can grow out of a project, which we then commercialise to sell. On the other hand, I have some collections that can be used for a project from time to time. It is very nice to work on, but it remains a sidetrack,' says Kerstens.

WARMTH AND SECURITY

Within his interior practice, it is important for the designer to be selective in the projects he takes on. 'Only in this way can we convey our signature. We are still growing rapidly in this respect, but we do have a clear preference for a natural approach. By using natural materials, we want to create a feeling of warmth and security, and that affinity for the traditional, detail and craftsmanship is also central. To focus less on the industrial and mass production, but more on refinement in detail and finishing of materials. That way we want to give each project a timeless and sober character, with a lot of atmosphere.'

Naming his design style, is something the architect finds difficult to do. 'Clients or people from the professional sector describe us as sober and minimalist, but I don't see it that way myself. To me, minimalist means cooler and very purified. With us, precisely because we focus so strongly on detail, there is a considerable weight to materials and detailing in a design, which makes it feel less minimalistic to me. Generally speaking, we create purified and balanced designs, both in terms of form and in terms of colour and material. We also often work with contrasts, not only in intensity, but also in the tactility of possible finishes and textures, so that the whole remains interesting. To bring cosiness and security into every project, we always start from the architectural, in order to arrive at solid designs,' we hear.



AUTHENTIC ELEMENTS REINTERPRETED

According to this approach, Andy Kerstens recently completed his MUD residence. In co-operation with inspirers Sophie and Frank, he transformed a sixties house in Oud-Heverlee into a guesthouse for four people with two bedrooms and bathrooms, where culture, design and architecture are beautifully combined. The authentic elements from the sixties were reinterpreted in a contemporary and honest way, thus putting them back in the spotlight. They were combined with pure and modern lines, resulting in new vistas and open spaces with abundant natural light. The existing layout of the house was completely optimised. The new canvas was then rearranged into a uniform flow that connects the different spaces. A minimal and austere steel extension enlarges the living space and creates a feeling of openness and light on the one hand, and a harmonious connection with the garden on the other.

As with every project, Kerstens approached this house from a natural angle. Flagstones occupy a prominent place in the design both inside and out, and natural and almost weathered materials add contrast to the spaces. Tactile details, rough but refined finishes and contrasting textures run like a red thread through MUD. A carefully selected collection of design classics, vintage pieces and art could not be left out and beautifully fills every room. Andy Kerstens saw to it that this 1960s villa was given a contemporary look, without detracting from that sense of authenticity and depth. The designer was equally thoughtful outside, where he carefully selected the trees and plants so that the lush garden would be green all year round.

BOLD LIVING

Although, MUD is not just your average residence. With their latest project, inspirators Sophie and Frank wanted to introduce a higher level of living: bold living. The residence offers an extra dimension to its guests whereby you choose the level of bold living, according to them. How you experience it is entirely in your hands. For example, the guesthouse can be transformed into a creative hub, which you choose what it looks like. A meeting room, exhibition space or rather a photo studio? It's all possible in MUD residence. 'When we got the chance to buy the adjacent property from our neighbours, we decided in a split second to take the plunge,' we hear from owners Frank and Sophie. 'Initially, the house was to serve as a guesthouse for friends and family. But soon we felt the urge to share our vision with a wider audience. With a passion for distinctive stories and a heart that beats for timeless design, we began the MUD journey. Following our own motto 'dream, believe, do, repeat', we transform our philosophy into a place for people to take a moment for themselves or share meaningful moments with others. At MUD, we invite people to create and connect.'

In short, the possibilities at MUD residence are endless. You can gather on the outside terrace for a cosy barbecue. Extra relaxation can be found in the private sauna, relaxation room or hot tub. And outside the house you will also find a source of inspiration, in the green surroundings of Oud-Heverlee. There is no doubt that you will return home with new ideas and experiences.

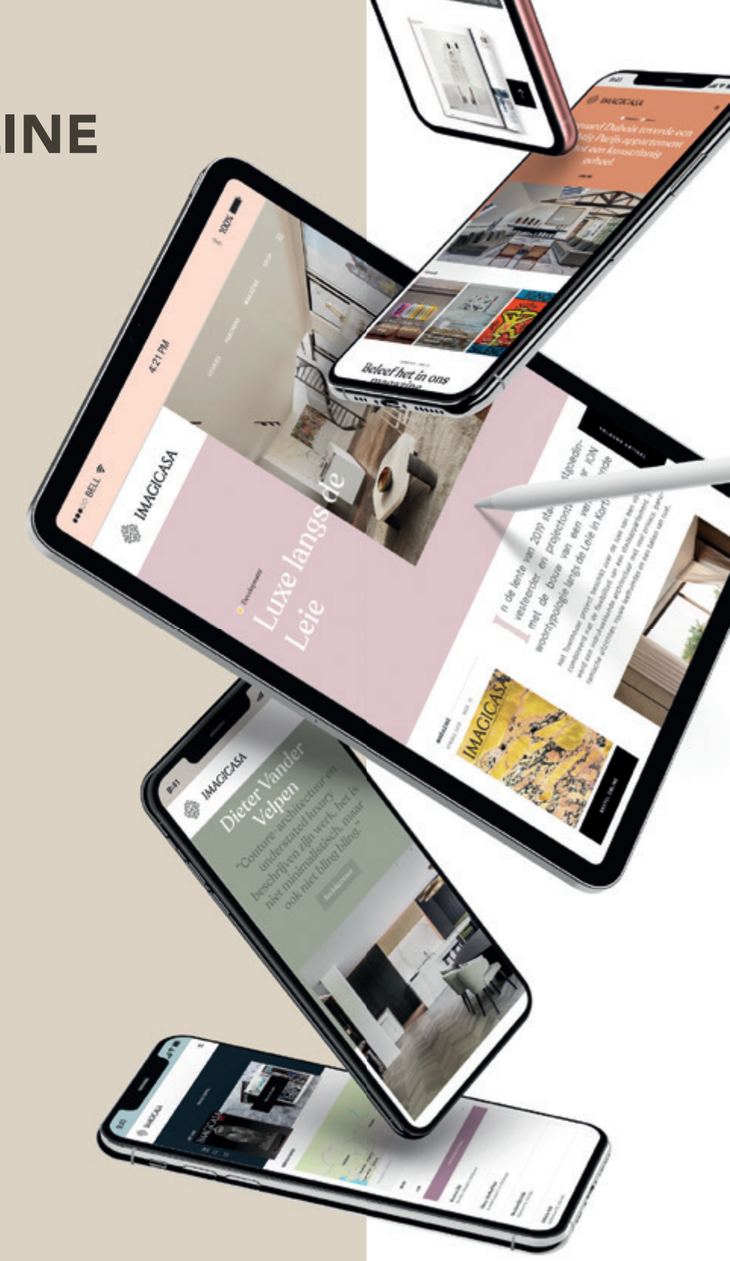
Architect Andy Kerstens turned, together with the owner couple, the house into a blank canvas for impressive ideas and exclusive happenings. Guests are completely immersed in a modestly luxurious and refined environment. Imagicasa has no doubt that every creative soul looking for an inspiring place to come up with new ideas will find a new home in MUD residence. (Text: Nathalie Van Laer)

Photography by Piet-Albert Goethals

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