

# INTERIOR WITH A SOUL



*Polish design studio Anke Design realised a beautiful monochrome home. Raw materials are combined with natural finishes and an earthy colour palette. Modest and sober, but warm in character, this is the perfect retreat. Like all Anke Design projects, this apartment is an expression of pure harmony and simplicity.*



**T**his time, Imagicasa takes you back to a design by Anke Design Studio called AXA House. It's not the first time we write about the talented Polish designer. In every project, she always manages to surprise us with her unique vision on design. With her most recent design, she gives a family house in Krakow a handmade soul. As is so often the case, the house this couple built for themselves more than a decade ago lagged behind their changing needs over the years, leaving many rooms non-functional or almost unused. The local interior design agency thoroughly renovated the house and adapted it to the current lifestyle of the owners and their growing family. Interior designer and founder Anna Gawlik worked closely with the couple to overhaul the layout of the house and adopt a minimalist aesthetic of muted tones and understated materials to achieve coherence and harmony.

Although the house was initially a mish-mash of communal, private and work spaces spread across all three floors, including the basement, the new layout is now clearer. After a thorough analysis of the family's needs, a new functional design was created for three floors. Thanks to the clarity in the different areas, all the bedrooms are now on the upper floor, the living and dining area is on the ground floor and the work studio is in the basement. The basement was brightened up by adding some new windows, making it a fully usable space, namely a workshop, utility room and there is even a guest area. The latter also serves as a playroom for the couple's daughter, along with a bathroom with sauna, laundry room and utility room. Multifunctionality was emphasised in these rooms.



What's more, the new layout has cleared the ground floor of superfluous or underused spaces, creating a spacious common area where the family can now spend most of their time. The space is spatially and symbolically centred around an open fireplace and divided into a living and dining area, with the original open layout replaced by a separate kitchen. The new layout is complemented by a minimalist aesthetic that brings all the spaces together harmoniously with a muted palette of colours and materials. Industrial concrete has been used throughout the house, including the terrace, replacing the original oak floors, while the walls and ceilings are covered in micro-concrete whose stucco-like texture makes the interior sober,

## Modest in design and as monochrome as possible

yet soft and warm at the same time. And above all, it beautifully absorbs the afternoon light. Furthermore, the white-painted steel ceiling beams subtly reflect the original layout without drawing attention to themselves. For the wall panels and furniture, Anke Design Studio opted for smoked veneer of recycled oak, which complements the monochrome palette of white and grey tones beautifully and adds soft accents, as does the natural oak used for the new staircase and the limestone cladding of the bathrooms. Finally, the guest toilet is a light brown marble slab with chips and an impressive sculptural washbasin. Despite the raw materials, the welcome in AXA House is warm.





**UNABASHED AUSTERITY FULL OF PERSONALITY**

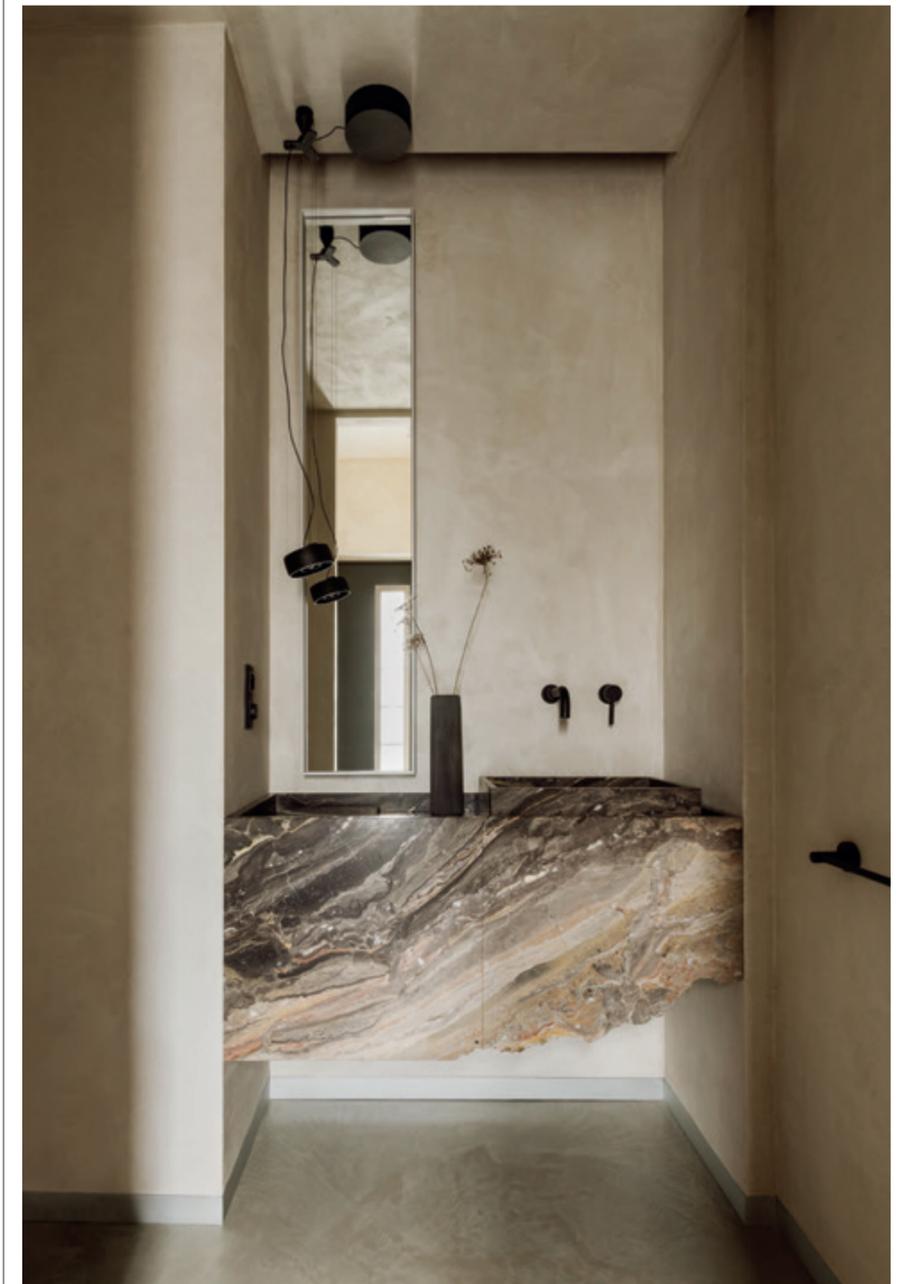
Despite the unabashed austerity of the interior design, the unit still excels in personality thanks to an eclectic selection of furniture, including custom-made pieces by the Polish design studio, and an exceptional collection of decorative objects, books and artworks. The living space features a partially charred wooden coffee table, made using the traditional Japanese method of Shou Sugi Ban, which provides the perfect dark accents to the otherwise light-coloured interior. The room is further complemented by paintings of horses by American painter James McLaughlin Way mixed with ceramics by Polish ceramicist Andrzej Mędrak, an early twentieth century wooden horse from Silesia, a lamp made from an antique vase from Iraq and other vintage finds from Kraków's trendy Kazimierz district. In the adjoining dining room there is another showpiece; a solid oak table, again custom designed by Anke Design Studio, made of thin porcelain diffusers forms a powerful centrepiece and makes other decorations superfluous. At the heart of the living room is a comfortable sofa for long film evenings, as well as a spacious library divided by the residents' book collections between literature, art and architecture and fantasy and science. The library is again a design by Anke Design Studio, made of steel rods. Each space is modest, as monochrome as possible and designed around the main function, stripped of ornaments. Simplicity is at the heart of everything here.

Gawlik has also given new life to much of the house's original furniture by recycling household appliances and accessories as much as possible, a laborious process that testifies to the designer's attention to sustainability and her careful design process. Finally, the garden, despite its small size, has also been treated conceptually. Thanks to large terrace windows, it is easily accessible from the living and dining room and from the kitchen. The owners' love for the sober Asian shapes comes fully to the fore here, as do their practical solutions. Large round concrete slabs made to measure promote the integrity of the garden. Even in such a small area, it was possible to separate zones

for a separate entrance to the studio and the house. For example, a spot was provided near the kitchen where you can have a cup of coffee in the morning - a large, hundred-metre-long terrace facing south. After ten years, despite many reorganisations in the garden, it has exploded into a real secret garden. Where you get the shade and coolness that are so desirable in summer, but also give you access to your own herb garden. A true gem and real addition to the whole.

For Anna Gawlik as a designer, this is an extremely important project: 'It is a milestone in my portfolio, a painstakingly developed

project that is by far the best - in my opinion - representation of the direction in which I want to go with my work and subsequent projects.' In our opinion, it is the result of many years of experimentation, experience and execution. For her, the AXA House is a signpost for the future, more so a direction and a conscious choice. (Text: Elke Aerts)



Architecture (2020): ANKE DESIGN STUDIO; Anna Gawlik & Anke Projekt, architecture after renovation (2019/2020); ANKE DESIGN STUDIO; Anna Gawlik  
Interior design: ANKE DESIGN STUDIO; arch.: Anna Gawlik, reconstruction structure: mgr inż. Michał Włodarski