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KITCHEN

'As we are by a river, I wanted a rustic finish for the cabinets,' says homeowner Marion Geller. 'I saw something similar at a designer fair, so I talked to our carpenter and we developed this kitchen together using riverwood.' Marion sourced the Polish Bluestone wall and floor tiles herself, while the table and ship's lamp are vintage pieces she found in Antwerp and London.

Interior design, Marion Geller, Lange Geller Kuehl Partners, lgk-partners.com.

RIVERSIDE VILLA

A chance conversation led to the discovery of this beautiful waterside home in Hamburg, which has been sensitively reworked with natural materials and luxurious touches

WORDS ANDRÉE FRIEZE
PHOTOGRAPHS CHRISTIAN SCHAULIN

STROKE of LUCK



DINING AREA

Marion felt that with such wonderful views to be enjoyed, curtains would be an unnecessary distraction. 'I like to see the clear skies and the elegant shape of the windows,' she says. A radiator beneath the window seat (left), together with underfloor heating, ensures the room is wonderfully warm throughout the colder months.

Medy chairs, from €420 each, Flamant, flamant-shop.de.



SITTING ROOM

'We like real fires but as this house had none, we had one installed in this room (above),' says Marion, who has decorated the mantelpiece with a branch from an agave tree. The understated tones of the coffee table, designed by Marion, work beautifully with the texture of the abstract artwork, which is made with sand.

Artwork, Michael Fleiss, 0049 4082 5549.

Fireplace, Mylin, mylin.de.

While Hamburg's waterways and culture make it a perennial favourite of city lovers, for those seeking a gentler lifestyle, the former fishing village of Blankanese, to the west of the city, is the place to be. Its half-timbered fishermen's houses and early-20th century villas, many of which have commanding views of the River Elbe, are particularly desirable and it is in one such villa that interior designer Marion Geller and her husband now enjoy living.

The couple had been quite content with their existing home in the area when, while dining at their favourite Italian restaurant, they met a friend, a house broker. At some point during the evening, Marion's husband declared that he would move just once more, but only if the house directly overlooked the Elbe. As Marion recalls, their friend replied: 'I have one with an uninterrupted view to the river.' Four days later, Marion and her husband had bought it. 'Many people hanker after a riverside home, but such properties rarely come on to market,' she says, 'so it meant we had to be quick.'

The villa dates from the 1940s and is a traditional Rotklinker stone building in a nature reserve. 'It has perfect feng shui,' says Marion, 'with a forested hill to the rear and the river at the front. As it is a protected building, we couldn't alter the exterior, but we could make changes inside.'

Accordingly, the couple set about opening up the house as much as they could. 'The existing rooms were too small and fragmented,' says Marion. 'They didn't flow together. When you came down the stairs, instead of walking into the drawing room, you turned a corner straight into a wall, which we removed to open up a view to the Elbe.'

The couple also decided to move the kitchen from the north side of the house to the south, so they could have a larger room, with a river aspect. 'The previous kitchen was small, with a separate dining room, but we prefer to sit and eat in one room. We like to have an easy-going, open-plan house.'

Just as they have created views of (and rearranged rooms to see) the river, so the couple have used a decorative scheme to complement the property's riverside setting. 'The same light grey was used on all the walls, except for those in the sitting room and in the television room, where we opted for darker tones for a cosier atmosphere. We didn't want to conceal the wonderful views so decided against curtains, and I like the casual feel that creates,' says Marion.

The simple, relaxed effect is not without its comforts, however, as Marion likes her luxuries too. The sofa in the sitting room is upholstered with a de Le Cuona fabric, for example, and the lighting is opulent. The few artworks have been chosen for their eye-catching appeal and, as Marion says, 'We use our home as a showcase for my interior design company, so clients can visit and see our work in situ. First and foremost, though, this is a home and, as my husband said, this is the last move he will make. Now that we're here, we're here to stay.'

DRAWING ROOM

The exposed brick enclosure behind the sofa (above right) was originally the front porch, which Marion has incorporated into the main living space. **Large Moon Pebble table**, £5,142; **Arctic Pear chandelier**, £7,872, both Ochre, ochre.net.

TERRACE

These outside seating areas (far left and right) were chosen for their vistas of the River Elbe. The house, the exterior of which is built from traditional Rotklinker stone, is located in the German equivalent of a British conservation area.



DRAWING ROOM

To open up the ground floor as much as possible, Marion had the wall between this room and the entrance hall removed. The new double doors, which lead to the sitting room at one end and the kitchen at the other, are rarely closed.

Eternal Dreamer sofa and armchairs, Ochre, ochre.net. **Sofa in** Buffalo linen, £245m, de Le Cuona, delectuona.com. **Vintage rug**, Miiuu, miiuu.de. **Waving Voices artwork** by Chris Pink, The Darryl Nantais Gallery, nantais-gallery.co.uk.





DAUGHTER'S BEDROOM

Alexandra chose the fabric for her headboard (left), which her mother designed for her. Headboard in Linara in Camellia, £37.50m, Romo, romo.com.

BATHROOM

To get around the problem of not being able to hang a mirror over the basin – which is actually a vintage animal trough – Marion placed mirrors on either side of the window (below). Brick towel rail, Decor Walther, decor-walther.com.

STAIRCASE

Marion painted the internal window embrasures to match the colour of the exterior frames, which local conservation laws dictate must be grey.



MAIN BEDROOM

Previously unused, the loft was ideally suited to conversion into a light-filled bedroom (right) and bathroom for Marion and her husband. Chair Mason recliner in Vintage Black, €1.890, Flamant, flamant-shop.de. Inchino floor lamp, Antonino Sciortino for Busnelli, busnelli.it.

