

HOME DESIGN By Amy Fabris Shi and Francesca Tarocco

Lanes Ahead

An old Shanghai lanehouse gets a dose of light and luster

“Italy is full of old stuff, and to insert a contemporary intervention into a historic space is a very Italian sensibility with regard to renovating,” says Italian architect Nunzia Carbone, whose DeDo Architecture+Design Studio has offices in Shanghai, Milan, Beijing and Manchester. In her designs of heritage homes and offices across Shanghai she aims to “inject new meaning into existing cultural forms,” but is not afraid to go boldly contemporary and playful.

A recent project where this idea played out nicely was in the remodeling of a Yuyuan Lu lanehouse. The 170-sqm home featured a typical lilong layout, developing over seven levels through a system of staggered floors connected by a staircase. The key design concept was to link all these different areas in order to give more light and ventilation to the darkest parts of the house.

Key to achieving this was replacing the former stairwell with a newly de-

signed staircase made of white metal and recovered wood, and creating new openings in the walls facing the stairs, which enhanced the sense of fluidity and harmony through the home. Where possible, original elements of the house were exposed, such as the wooden ceiling beams and grey brick walls (some of which bear the original chop of the maker). Badly rotten wooden floors were replaced with reclaimed elm wood, and other market finds were re-invented as groovy doors or custom-made furnishings.

The double-fronted ground level now combines a large open kitchen and dining area leading to a walled courtyard garden. On the other levels are the living room, guest room, studio, storage space and bathrooms. The most private top floor is reserved for the master bedroom, which is connected to the master bathroom via a long corridor and suspended wardrobe extending on a bridge facing the staircase.



The DeDo team covered the concrete wall in the small green courtyard with a large mosaic, which not only gives an illusion of space, but also casts playful reflections and light effects back towards the living room.



The master bedroom on the top floor is connected to the master bathroom by a long suspended cabinet made of silk-painted doors hand-painted in green, with a re-creation of a traditional dragon motif.



The metal staircase with reclaimed wooden treads, its original wood wall gable, original brick wall and metal staircases also window frame create a compelling dialogue between the contemporary and the traditional.



A bright guest bathroom is adorned with a colorful strip of mosaic tile in a 1/2 shade.



The uneven gabled floor leads down into a central staircase custom designed in metal and wood.



Local kiln is turned into a functional element in the master bath room. The yellow gable screen is more than just a colorful reference to the iconic status of calligraphy in Chinese contemporary culture. It also screens the shower and provides a light neutral contrast to the clean lines and organic materials used in the rest of the room.

Life & Style