

Zu Hause bei Ester Bruzkus

80 Quadratmeter Berlin

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At Home with Ester Bruzkus

80 Square Meters of Berlin

Play it again: The architect Ester Bruzkus moved from one apartment to another in the same house. Although both are the same size, she discovered unimaginable possibilities.

The small apple tree is full of fruits. The honeysuckle and the zucchini flourish splendidly. "Next year," says Ester Bruzkus, "I really want to start gardening, planting strawberries and kohlrabi." Until a few months ago nothing grew here, everything was gray and barren. "Now," says the architect contentedly, "it is almost a jungle." And then this view: 360 degrees Berlin - the Telecommunications tower, Potsdamer Platz, the tiny Europa-Center, the Humboldthain - they all drift in the sea of stones below us. The roof terrace was one of the reasons why Bruzkus wanted to have this apartment, even though she had had a very appealing apartment in the same house for a long time. This was the second chance to try out a few new ideas that her clients would have dismissed the first time.



On her roof terrace, she built an inviting lounge that still leaves enough room for one of her passions: gardening at dizzy heights. Of course, she also designed the wooden platforms themselves. (Photo: Jens Bösenberg)



If the sky over Berlin isn't as bright as it is shown here, then Bruzkus lights up Oriental patterns on the roof terrace. "With these carpets I imagine the apartment of an intellectual Moscow in the Paris of the '20s, I like that." (Photo: Jens Bösenberg)

So she moved to the sixth floor - and made the move into an interesting experience. The so-called *Estradenhaus*, built in 1998 by Wolfram Popp ("my former professor in Berlin") as one of the first new buildings after the fall of the Berlin Wall in the Prenzlauer Berg district, is characterized by the fact that movable elements for individual floor plans offer a multitude of spatial options. "I only had three wishes," recalls Ester Bruzkus. "One, I wanted to move the kitchen into the dining room. Besides that, I had decided to put all my things in just half the closet space. And the bathroom should be in the hammam style." The designer worked on the details for half a year day-and-night.



All lights in the apartment come from PSLab. The hammam tub in the bathroom has Bruzkus designed with rough washed terrazzo panels, which makes their surface non-slip. The untreated brass of the Vola fittings will eventually pick up a beautiful olive-green patina. (Photo: Jens Bösenberg)



My life in old rose: "The clay has a calming effect on me," says Ester Bruzkus. The pastel green dining table "Memphis Melon" is also her, his geometric shapes are a tribute to Ettore Sottsass. These are joined by Hans J. Wegner's "Wishbone" chairs and Carl Hansen's "Elbow-Chairs". (Photo: Jens Bösenberg)



The custom-made wall units in light gray match the concrete floor of the apartment. When the doors are opened, the shelves in “Sea Blue” by Swiss Krono light up. The sofa is a prototype, designed by the hostess and related to the fantastic soft velvet “Splendido” by Dedar. (Photo: Jens Bösenberg)

Born in Haifa as the daughter of a Russian Jewish immigrant and raised in Berlin-Charlottenburg, she was accustomed from childhood to deal with influences from various origins. Her design work is similar. "As an architect, I am a minimalist," says Ester Bruzkus, "but in my deepest heart I love opulence." Within just a few years, she has made a name for herself internationally as a hotel designer.

In Berlin, she designed, among other things, the "Amano" and the "Mani" hotels, both which are especially popular with younger travelers. This new generation of jet-setters attaches less importance to the splendid isolation of large suites but appreciates all the more generously furnished restaurants, bars and lobbies, in which party goers are among themselves. The concept grants the designer liberties. But the architect also knows what conflict feels like. When she designed patchwork-printed carpets for the first "Amano" hotel in Auguststrasse in Berlin-Mitte, the clients were so shocked that the senior boss imposed a four-year ban on building sites because he thought she had ruined his hotel. In the meantime, the anger is long gone. "Just recently," says Ester Bruzkus, "the owner told me he now lives very well with the carpets. He said they still look like new, and that, of course, made me happy."



The side tables come from the collaboration with Patrick Batek. Since October she runs her own architectural office. (Photo: Jens Bösenberg)



Art at the table: on the wall are works from the series “Pommes, Coffee, Beer, Ice Cream and Sausage” by the young artist Lukas Julius Keijser. (Photo: Jens Bösenberg)

Even in her apartment there are details that will stay fresh for a long time. The built-in wardrobes, which were custom-made, look discreet from the outside in their nuances of gray and light wood. However, when you open the doors, they radiate powerful colors: green and blue and yellow. In the area of the loft, which took the place of the traditional living room, lies a fluffy, but also somewhat coarse Berber carpet. And in front of it is a velvet-covered sofa in three different mysteriously glowing reds, which Bruzkus designed and cannot be described otherwise than a matter of glamor.



From the dining room an open passage leads to the small bedroom. Knitted wool bedspread by Miriam Dalis. Jung sockets match the wall color. (Photo: Jens Bösenberg)

Contrasts like these are appreciated by Bruzкус. “In traditional Japanese aesthetics, there is the notion that there can be no perfection without error. This is an intuition that I really like.” Her ability to make opposites attractive is due to another factor in her personal biography. After studying architecture at the Technical University of Berlin, she went to Paris to spend another year at Architecture School.

This was the same school that French architect and interior designer Joseph Dirand went to, but in the first few weeks there she thought she would not be able to stay with it. “Everything was extremely regulated, even the grade of the pencils was proscribed for us,” recalls the architect. Week after week all she was supposed to do was to draw a structural column and its shadow on the wall. But after twelve months, she found that she had learned more about design in the time in Paris than in five years at the TU Berlin.



Architects love steel scaffolding - Ester Bruzkus is no exception. (Photo: Jens Bösenberg)

The handwriting she appropriated in the style capital of Paris can be found everywhere in her apartment. However, she has taught herself gardening. And even there can be no doubt about her extraordinary talent.