



DECORATOR'S INDEX

ESTER BRUZKUS

The Berlin-based designer brings her glamorous interiors to life with playful juxtapositions



Who is she? West Berlin-born Bruzkus initially dreamt of being a fashion designer before a summer job at Disney World, Florida, threw her off course. Seduced by the world of hospitality, she decided to return to Europe to pursue a career in architecture, with a view to becoming a creator of hotels, restaurants and bars. In 2002, she set up her own practice, Esther Bruzkus Architekten, after studying at the École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris-Belleville and the Technische Universität Berlin respectively. Bruzkus's breakthrough project was the Amano Hotel in Berlin's Mitte district; bars, restaurants, cinemas and apartment renovations followed. Today, with her American business partner Peter Greenberg, she employs a team of 15 at her Berlin-based office.

What is her style? 'I enjoy working with contradictory elements,' Bruzkus says of her interiors, which are characterised by contrasting materials and shapes. 'Thick and thin, sharp and soft, curved and straight, common and opulent, colourful and restrained,' she adds. Inspiration comes from a variety of influences, ranging from the typical – travel, art galleries and architecture – to the less so: 'dreams, random conversations, bridges, street signs, clouds, bodies of water and light and shadows', she says. L.A. Poke restaurant in Berlin is a case in point, as she cites a dizzyingly diverse number of influences, from David Hockney's 1967 painting *A Bigger Splash*, and the imagery of the Italian surrealist artist Giorgio de

Chirico, to the architecture of Mies van der Rohe and Ettore Sottsass, plus Rothko's use of light, the work of theatre director Robert Wilson, Corbusier's 1931 colour palette and an actual sliced avocado.

What are her most recent projects? An eponymous restaurant for top Berlin chef Tim Raue in the Villa Kellermann, Potsdam, awarded 'Gastronomer of the Year' by French restaurant guide Gault & Millau. Bruzkus' goal with the historic site, which dates back to 1914, was to 'create an ambiance that bridges the familiar and the new by using a historical colour palette with precise modern detailing'. Mixing vintage and contemporary pieces and old and new fabrics, the interior is a fusion of eras, making it truly of the moment and, as she says, 'a surprising harmony of everyday and opulence'.

What is she working on next? Two neighbouring boutique hotels in Munster, both with the same owner. A Modern European restaurant called 'Remi' is also underway and due to open in Berlin's Mitte neighbourhood in April.

She says 'To be a good designer, one has to be a good listener: not only to the needs of the clients, but also to the space – the building really tells you what it wants to be. We think good design combines rational and logical planning with playful contrasts of materials and forms. You must follow your gut. Don't be afraid of doing something new, or of mixing and matching unusual things. Remember the actual material details are super important, though. How materials meet and combine can determine whether something is beautiful or not. And an important tip to clients is to trust your interior designer!' esterbruzkus.com

EXPERT ADVICE

How to create dramatic interiors using contrast

- 1 Mixing cool and warm tones in just the right way is very important. For example, green and pink, yellow and grey, turquoise and orange.
- 2 Play with contrasts – soft and hard; dark and light; thick and thin; bold and subtle – in colours, materials and details.
- 3 We like to make designs that use objects of varying sizes and in different materials. Sometimes the relationships are harmonious, sometimes they jar; it's this dialogue between the two that gives a project its identity.
- 4 Create surprises. For example, the exterior can have a contradictory style to what's on the inside – in colour, material or texture. When you expect everything to be one way, it should absolutely be another.
- 5 Alternatively, work with just one colour for emphasis. We did this at the Futurice office in Berlin where each team space had a distinct colour, wall paint, carpet, furniture, lighting and fabrics all in one hue.

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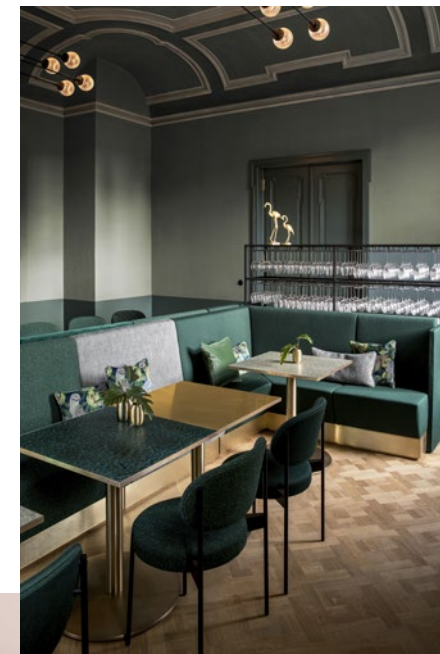
'WHEN YOU EXPECT EVERYTHING TO BE ONE WAY, IT SHOULD ABSOLUTELY BE ANOTHER'



Opposite In Bruzkus' Berlin home, the velvet sofa in three hues of pink is her own design with Studio Coucou called 'Canapé'. **Above** A soft Berber rug and her custom-design marble-top tables continue the theme of juxtaposition. **Right** LA Poke in Berlin, where the inspiration of Hockney can be seen



Above Bruzkus used 3D tiles from DTile, with bright grouting in the Futurice office, Berlin. **Left** Seating is upholstered in 'Forest' from Morris & Co at Tim Raue in Villa Kellermann. **Below** A historical colour palette fuses with modern detailing throughout the chef's venue



THE LITTLE BLACK BOOK

Every project has its own unique list of suppliers and craftspeople. Part of making it special is finding the right mix and match

TEXTILES

Our favourites are Dedar, Kvadrat, Backhausen and Gastón y Daniela. All of these brands provide products of high quality, with a broad colour spectrum, and patterns that are timely. We look for a wide mix of modern and traditional brands within a single colour group, especially across different time eras.

LIGHTS

We like to work with PSLab, which offers consultants, fixture designers, manufacturers and suppliers. It fully understands our design intent and adds lighting to enhance the ambience of a room. We also like Areti and Lambert & Fils. We're always looking for contemporary and fresh ideas that extend our vision of each project.

COLOUR

Les Couleurs Le Corbusier produces paint in amazing colours that are expressive, studied and not shy. Le Corbusier made two colour collections in 1931 and 1959 – both of which are wonderful and a reliable starting point.

FURNITURE

We design most of the furniture for projects ourselves, except for freestanding chairs and for those, we look for pieces that have not been overused. The choice of furniture is important – it depends whether it should be the diva that dominates the room or a good team player. We always find good furniture at Nilufar, Studio Coucou and at the Carpenters Workshop Gallery. **See Stockists page for details**