

APRIL & MAY 2015

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FARM HOUSE
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THE STYLISH LIVING MAGAZINE

BELGIAN FARMHOUSE

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This project was to fully renovate a relatively new farmhouse in Belgium which was built in the 1970's in an area well known for fruit farming and horse riding. My client is a successful young businessman and farmer who travels a great deal, spending much of his time hotels. The idea therefore was to deliver that hotel level of luxury in the farmhouse, but also making the property warm and comfortable, only using high-quality natural materials and incorporating real fireplaces for a homely feel for when he returns. The exterior improvements also needed to be sympathetic to the surrounding buildings which in many cases were much older properties, with some dating from the 15th century.

The Belgian countryside had a great impact on my inspiration with beautifully maintained gardens and endless fruit fields. The original design was rooted in a conventional countryside context and had been

untouched for many years, so I was excited by the idea of revisiting these elements to make them more relevant to modern living with a marriage between the old and new, retaining aspects of a classic interior combined with modern finishes and the choice of furniture balanced with the wooden beams.

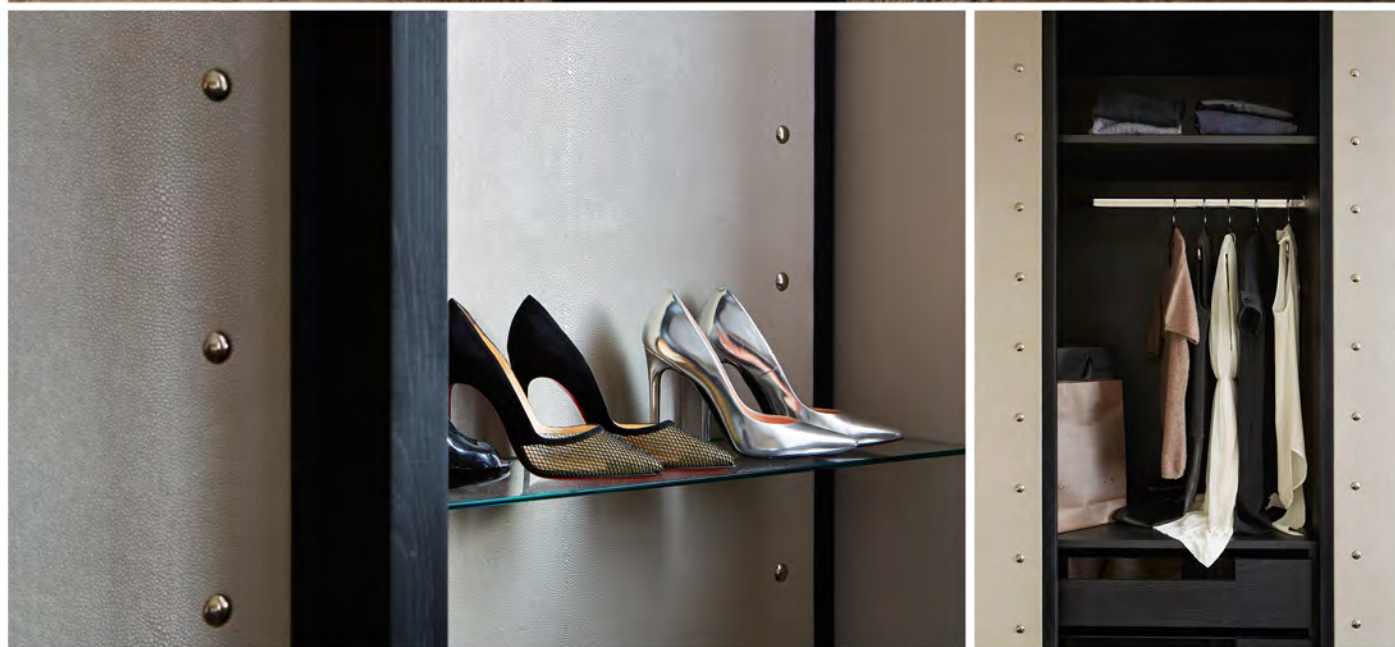
We began by making a significant structural change to the rear wall of the property, extending this outwards to create more space for a larger kitchen and including a 14 metre long floor to ceiling glass wall running the length of the kitchen and living areas to both significantly improve the natural light in the living room and frame a spectacular view and interaction with the gardens. Working with a local architect, Jeroen Bellings, we received planning permission from the local authority and within a month started on the building work.



THE MASTER BATHROOM FEATURES FLOOR TO CEILING JAPANESE STYLE BLINDS FOR PRIVACY AND TO CREATE A CALMING SPACE FOR HIM TO UNWIND IN THE FREESTANDING BATH.



THE GUEST BEDROOM FEATURES TWIN BEDS IN A MORE NEUTRAL TRADITIONAL STYLE DÉCOR FOR THE OWNERS' FRIENDS WHO VISIT.



We upgraded all the heating and electrical systems and installed a Domotica home automation system to control both the heating, interior and exterior lighting, window blinds and sheers, which can all be operated and adjusted remotely from the screen of a smartphone or tablet.

Lighting is very important in design and I apply a lot of imagination to creative, and sometimes adventurous, lighting solutions. Every square meter of the space has been considered with a carefully designed lighting plan to provide a number of circuits different requirements and purposes throughout the property. The principle room lighting included ceiling, wall and pendant lights. The low-level lighting is an important consideration for me in creating the right ambience, and in highlighting art, accessories, texture of the furniture and character of the walls. Placing LED floor spots to highlight the bathroom and wall washes creates a luxurious visual flair without the need for painting or hanging art. Using task lights on the wall is a thoughtful option for the bedroom and is a good option in place of table lamps when one party likes to read.



Each of the circuits can be individually dimmed or brightened and can offer many different effects and moods at any given time.

Notwithstanding the importance of light, dark colour is important for mood. I introduced an element of glamour with large black shaded chandeliers over the dining table. Black is also featured throughout the scheme as for me it is a grounding element.

The main entrance lobby leads into the large dining and living areas. Natural zoning is afforded by the split-level hard wood flooring, firstly the dining area on the lower level flowing to steps up to the living area remaining open plan but separated by a glass balustrade, which features a large comfortable sofa to watch television from with additional seating for guests linked by a chrome and glass coffee table.







Feature LED lit nooks add interest and a practical space for storing wood for the fireplace and link the spaces. It is important to understand how people will move through the space to ensure optimum practicality is achieved and in this instance the natural flow of the zones works perfectly for day to day living, there remains comfortable room to walk around the dining table once people are seated, and all doors can be opened without fear of knocking a piece of furniture. The floor plan was redesigned not only

to achieve this practical flow of movement, but also for about what you see and experience as you go. Each zone has sufficient space to allow the house to breathe. From the raised living area steps lead down a beautiful wide naturally lit corridor flanked by the floor to ceiling glass wall and garden views, to the open-plan kitchen and additional lounge area, which creates a welcoming social hub and additional heart of the home, perfect for an evening relaxing by the fireplace. Two free-standing glass cabinets in the



kitchen diner library and study zone adjacent to the kitchen add purpose and luxury as well as defining this separate area which includes discrete storage units with leather runners which provide ample space for home office or audio visual equipment and the like. The door off this space leads to the bedrooms and bathrooms,

The bedroom is the last place you see when you go to sleep and the first one you see when you wake. This is the place for deep relaxation and your state of well-being. I believe everything in the bedroom has to be designed to both calm and comfortable, where a luxurious and sensual harmony can be achieved through silk bed-sheets or velvet-linen curtains.

The custom-made wardrobe is decorated with imitation stingray leather runners on the doors and cascades of crystal lights create a beautiful mood of light and shadow balanced with under-lit bedside cabinets and glass shelves for accessories or displaying object d'art.

Next year, the owner has plans to convert the huge loft space into a master suite, so I am looking forward to returning once more to create a bedroom he really won't want to leave.

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