

# DESIGN TODAY

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SPACES ETCETERA



ISSUE FOCUS

## KITCHEN

IDEAS, INNOVATIONS, TRENDS

**PRIVATE SPACES:** MULTI-CUISINE, NEO-PORTUGUESE, FAMILY, ECO-FRIENDLY, FARMHOUSE

**PHOTO ESSAY:** MULTI-STORAGE, ERGONOMIC STEEL, WOOD

**ARTICLE:** ARCHITECTS ON TRADITIONAL VS MODULAR KITCHENS

**PUBLIC SPACES:** JAPANESE RESTAURANT, ITALIAN EATERY, BRAZILIAN & CHINESE RESTAURANTS, ORGANIC FOOD STOP

INTERIORS: COASTAL RETREAT, LOS ANGELES ■ ARCHITECTURE: HOMES IN THE NETHERLANDS AND ARIZONA





# SACRED UNITY

CHAPEL HOUSE IN UTRECHT, THE NETHERLANDS, A RESTORED OLD CHAPEL CONVERTED INTO A RESIDENCE IS a classic example of how creativity can have divine manifestations. ZECC Architects render fresh meaning to the house, marrying the old with the new, writes Nikita Kalra





The new window resembling a Mondrian painting connects with the city while the original leaded glass tells a religious story

**W**hen it comes to imagination and unbridled creativity, there are literally no boundaries. The fact is starkly evident when the designers aim to achieve something totally unfathomable, and end up doing it with the utmost panache. ZECC Architects, a Dutch firm specialising in restoring old buildings and giving them a fresh lease of life have come up with a master creation in the form of Chapel House, an old chapel turned into a modern residential apartment. Located in Utrecht, the ancient and fourth largest city in The Netherlands, the Chapel House was an old historical building which needed a facelift. And while doing so, the architect got the brief from the client that he would like to build his residence on the second floor of the

**Characteristic relics are maintained and used, affording tension between the old and the new functions of the chapel**

chapel building itself. Thus began the challenging task of creating a spacious 2,700 sq ft apartment on top of a place of worship whose original character and sanctity had to be carefully protected and enhanced.

The original building lacked windows at eye-level along the height of the floor, and therefore the church gave a very closed impression. Since it was being converted into a residence, it was extremely important that the occupants of the house could have contact with the surroundings outside.





The balcony with the pipe organ lends a spatial hierarchy to the different areas such as the kitchen, living and study



This contact was created through the introduction of a bold, abstract version of a leaded glass front framing. The architect designed a window to be cut into the front on the street side to bring in more light—the result vaguely resembling a Mondrian painting. Despite lending a sense of darkness to the church, the original stained glass on the windows has been retained.

However, skylights have been created on the sloping roof sides, through which diffused daylight enters the chapel. Viewed together, the colourful stained-glass windows and the pristine white interiors create an absolutely mesmerising effect in the interiors. The original leaded glass also speaks of the religious sanctity behind the building in a more aesthetic way.

The original organ of the chapel was kept as a tribute to the history of the building. The balcony/ledge where the organ stands, extends above the kitchen, offering a separate



The bathroom is given a contemporary makeover with ultra-chic accessories and fittings, accentuated by the ornate chandelier

place for the study area. This element breaks up the different living spaces, such as the living area and the kitchen. The bedroom and bathroom were left dark on purpose, to create a visual contrast.

The bathroom, complete with ultra-modern accessories and fittings, has been quirkily designed in shades of navy blue. An ornate, modern chandelier adds a dash of glamour to the place.

Furniture has been kept to a minimum, since each piece stands out against the stark white surroundings. The original church benches have been reused with a view to retaining the original character of the place. The kitchen area is devoid of any clutter, with just a sink, a stainless-steel overhead chimney and a bright-red coffee-maker giving away the secret that it is indeed a cooking area.

A new spatial hierarchy is created by the asymmetric placing of the balcony/ledge. The objective is to keep the

## **Furniture was kept to the minimum and the original church benches retained, in keeping with the pristine white surroundings**

décor minimalistic and it makes for abstract shapes, by which it creates a contrast with the original, soft shapes of the chapel. Specific, characterising elements, such as relics have been maintained and used, by which a nice field of tension comes into existence between the old and new functions of the chapel-turned-residence.

Ever since its completion in April 2007, the Chapel House has been a subject of conversation and intrigue amongst the fraternity of architects across the world. Setting new standards in 'conversion' architecture, the house may just be a queer, though original, attempt by the owner to place himself 'next to Godliness'.