

International Homes

Extra space and a fresh identity



PHOTOGRAPHS BY FLORIAN HOLZHER

An add-on with attitude

The humble home extension can be elevated to an art form

BY JOANN PLOCKOVA

In south London, a Victorian house has a new extension clad in black aluminum, with a distinctive three-fold roofline. The work has transformed a cold, dark area that the owners used very little into a bright, open-plan space that is now the hub of the home.

"Perhaps the best accolade we could give is even eighteen months from completion, the wow factor is still there," wrote the owner, Alan Jones, in an email.

A short drive away is Battersea House, a terraced property that now has two extensions: a contemporary rooftop addition for a new master bedroom suite and an open-plan space downstairs. The latter stretches into the garden, and its cream brick contrasts with the postwar property's dark painted exterior.

"The relationship of how we use the garden has totally changed," said John Proctor, an architect and the owner of Battersea House, where he lives with his family. "A lot of these projects address the challenge of how a modern family wants to live."

Mr. Proctor's firm Proctor & Shaw, which specializes in projects like Battersea House and the nearby Victorian property, is among a number of practices elevating the extension beyond mere addition to something of an art form. Treating each project with the same care and creativity they would grant to a bigger venture, their approaches vary from the transitional to the transformational, and the range of benefits to owners can include both economic and environmental perks.

"Each one has its own story to tell," Mr. Proctor said.

Like many extension projects, those at Battersea House were part of a larger-scale renovation, as was an extension to a California-style bungalow

on the outskirts of Melbourne, in Australia.

"The owner didn't need more space or big space," said Chris Stanley, the co-director of a local architecture and interior design firm, Splinter Society. "It was really about redefining space and then reconnecting it to its garden to work better."

Elwood House, a weatherboard bungalow badly in need of repair, had been occupied by the same owner, an actress and writer, for over 30 years. Her requirements were unusual.

"It wasn't your standard brief of knock off the back of the house and put huge glass with flowing entertaining areas into the garden," Mr. Stanley said. "It was more about creating smaller, intimate spaces that connected in different ways." This meant that at different times of day, from season to season, he said, there were different things happening.

Among the intimate spaces the studio created was a new lounge room of around 30 square meters. It includes a library to house the owner's many books and a large picture window that connects directly to the smaller of two added decks.

"The lounge connects to the garden in multiple ways," said Mr. Stanley, "and because of where we positioned it, the addition allows the smaller private spaces behind it to have new connections to the garden through glass links."

The room's outer walls are covered in a cement render, picking up on the few

areas where the material was already found in the bungalow and also on a connection to Japan, where the owner loves to travel.

"Traditionally a lot of the inspiration and references to California bungalows was of Japanese origin," Mr. Stanley said. The builders used Arakabe, a traditional Japanese technique, and enhanced its textured appearance with a raked tool, "to give further relief in the surface to pick up on the light," Mr. Stanley said.

While Proctor & Shaw's modernist tendencies often lead to extensions that contrast with their parent home, particularly in parts of London where many buildings date to the Victorian era, Splinter Society says its personal preference is a blend between old and new.

"We don't really do minimal or modern work, it normally picks up on cues or references from the old house and then reinterprets those in a modern way to create a bit of a continuity or homogeneity," Mr. Stanley said. "We usually think it's important for there to be a link or a bit of a story in that connection, rather than place an alien addition on the back."

At Hofstraat House, a neo-roccoco building in Ghent, Belgium, there was no 'back.' Tasked with creating a reading room for a university professor with a lot of books, the local firm Dierendonckblanck Architects found a bold solution by looking up.

"We saw an opportunity because other than a small outdoor space with little sunlight on the ground floor, the



owner had no outdoor space," said Alexander Dierendonck, who leads the firm with Isabelle Blancke. "So we came up with a proposal to add a rooftop volume. The conditions were nice, with nice views of the city."

The resulting roof pavilion, made from thick cross-laminated timber and

More room
A house near Munich in Germany, top and above, adjoins the owner's family home.

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EVAN JOSEPH

Six must-haves needed to seduce choosy buyers

Developers and designers say these luxury extras make a condo stand out

BY JANE MARGOLIES

Developers have long worked with star architects on their luxury buildings, but some years ago they also began hiring top-flight designers to give the interiors the same panache as the exteriors.

Having designers like Paris Forino, Ryan Korban or Lee Mindel associated with a building became yet another way to brand it as special — and worthy of prices that can run more than \$2,400 a square foot, compared with the norm of \$1,500 a square foot, according to a re-

cent report by Douglas Elliman, a real estate company.

But while developers hire designers to add a signature style to differentiate their buildings from the competition, it doesn't always work out that way: The apartments end up having quite a lot in common with others in the same market niche.

"Everybody's looking at what everybody else is doing," said Jonathan Miller, the president of Miller Samuel Real Estate Appraisers & Consultants, comparing the phenomenon to the so-called amenities war in which projects try to match one another in the number and lavishness of common spaces. Similarly, an apartment can be "really nice and special and unique — and not dissimilar to the other five places you just looked

at," Mr. Miller said.

So how do you distinguish a high-end apartment from a standard-issue one? Here are some of the materials and finishes — trending, but not always new — that developers are hoping will attract affluent buyers.

HERRINGBONE OR CHEVRON?

Remember dark-stained floors? Today, high-end apartments are more likely to have white oak underfoot — particularly European or French white oak from trees that, yes, grow in France — though it's probably not solid oak but rather an engineered product with the wood veneer on top.

Often the planks of wood are not lined up next to one another in staggered patterns. **INTERIORS, PAGE 14**

Art in its place
With so many new developments offering floor-to-ceiling windows, an unused wall is now often marketed as an "art wall" or "gallery."