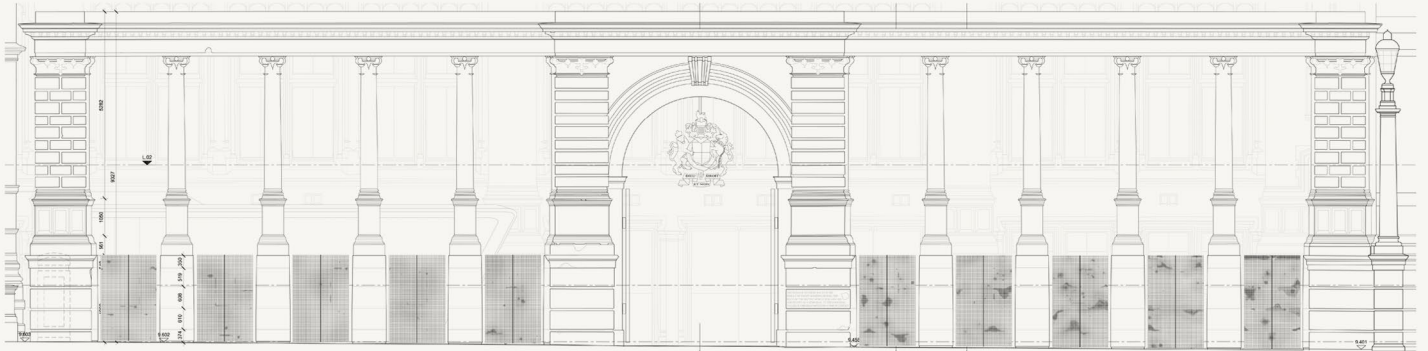


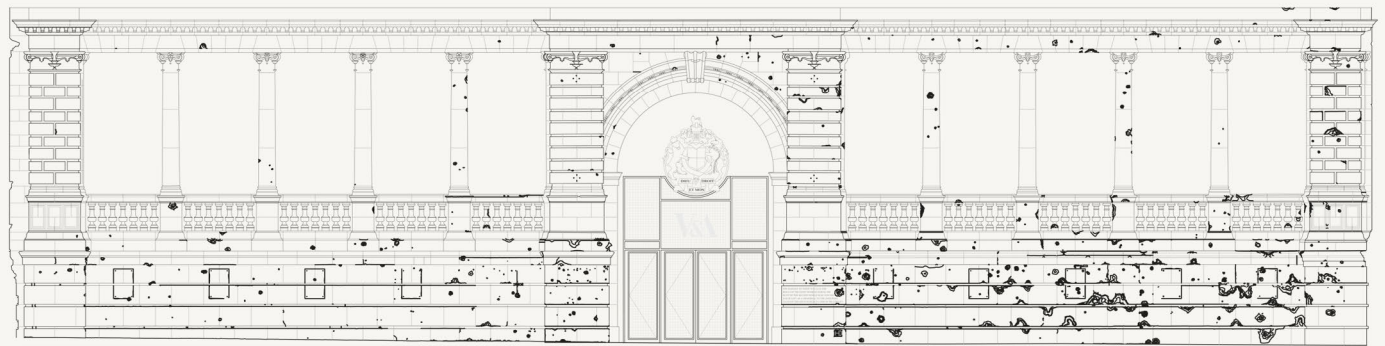
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MEMPHIS BELLE

BY MICHELE KOH MOROLLO PHOTOGRAPHY BY ÁRON ERDŐHÁTI

Style is married with minimalism in a Budapest apartment overlooking the Danube

Geza Hamori and Margit Szinger are passionate about the business of renovation. That's why their company, Margeza, purchases old apartments, redesigns them, and puts them back on the market.

Hamori, from Belgium, is a former librarian for the European Court of Justice, and was also a part-time contemporary art curator in Luxembourg. Szinger, from Hungary, is a biologist who earned her second degree in arts and design in Budapest. Both have retired from their former occupations, though their new one keeps them busy.

"In our golden years, we wanted to do something that would give us joy, while offering something useful and beautiful to others," says Szinger. "We are passionate about our work, and it is important for us to design spaces with good energy – homes that put people in a good mood."

Their latest home renovation project is a 110 sq-m, two-level apartment in the historic centre of Budapest, in which they presently live, and plan to stay, until they find the right buyer.

"Like all our apartments, we bought it and redesigned it for ourselves. Our aim was to redesign the space so it is more liveable, and build a home we would enjoy living in," says Hamori.

OPPOSITE Splashes of colour from a yellow chair and red radiator pop in the white-on-white interior



A vertical green wall, fed by an automatic irrigation system, brings a little nature into the apartment



Glossy white steps with under-stairs storage lead to the upper level where the master bedroom is located



ABOVE The apartment is located in a 1928 building that overlooks the city's parliament building and the Danube
BELOW In the dining area, a Leolux table, surrounded by Kartell chairs creates a composition that reminds one of a flower with bright red petals

They probably won't have long to wait: Margeza's one-of-a-kind style properties are quick to draw investors' attention. "Our unique design, along with the excellent locations of our properties, offers buyers great

The founders of Margeza - Belgian-Hungarian couple Margit Szinger and Geza Hamori



returns on their investments," says Hamori. "But we do not create our homes on commission. We design each of our properties for ourselves. Once we've completed the work, we put it up for sale, but we live in the apartments first to test their functionality before a buyer comes into the picture."

Located in a 1920s building that overlooks the city's famous parliament building and the waters of the River Danube, the apartment is a colourful, sun-drenched modern home with a cheerful, vibrant ambience.

Hamori and Szinger are most inspired by the Memphis Group - the short-lived Italian design movement founded in Milan in 1981 by Italian architect and designer Ettore Sottsass, which favoured bright, bold colours, asymmetry, and materials such as ceramics, glass and metal. "We also like soft minimalism, where gentle curves create balance between the spots of colour and the white of the apartment. We included curving furniture and walls, then added vivid colours and irregularly shaped spaces for a playful Memphis spirit," says Szinger.



Because the building's original floor plan and division of functional zones was not to their liking, they demolished and rebuilt the walls. They chose a circle, which appears on the doors, lamps and armchairs, as the dominant motif. Many of the furniture items were custom-designed by Margeza and handmade by a team of carpenters. "We wanted everything to be easy to clean, so we chose high-gloss furniture and stairs and counters made of Corian. Searching for the accessories like lamps and chairs was a lot of fun, though a lot of hard work for us too. We spent almost half a year hunting down the limited-edition colourful Artemide lamps we wanted," says Szinger.

The original arched windows had many small panes with dividers that broke up the view. Margeza commissioned special locally made windowpanes, supported by anchors at the top and bottom. "This way, there are no dividing lines to draw the eye away from the beautiful park," says Szinger. "We wanted to emphasise the views, so we put in division-less windows and a glass wall," she adds. Besides the large single-pane window, the apartment also has two terraces that offer panoramic city and river views.



The 110 sq-m, two-level apartment is in the historic centre of Budapest

Hamori and Szinger designed a floating bed and curved cabinet for one of the bedrooms



Glossy white reflects light and makes the apartment very bright and open



ABOVE Materials such as metal and glass in the bathroom pay homage to Memphis style
BELOW A white background allows for the use bold colours. Loose furniture and accessories can be easily changed to reflect the preferences of a new owner



On the first level are an anteroom, living room, kitchen, dining room, guest bathroom and a bedroom with en-suite bathroom



“OUR OPTIMISM, LOVE AND LIFE INSPIRE OUR DESIGN PROCESS. THE WHITE BACKGROUND ALLOWS US TO USE BOLD COLOURS”

On the first level are an anteroom, living room, kitchen, dining room, guest bathroom and a bedroom with an en-suite bathroom. In the living room, the highlights are a vertical green wall, fed by an automatic irrigation system, which brings a little nature into the apartment, and the large glass window, which frames beautiful views of the city down below. “All the walls are a glossy white, which reflects light and makes the apartment very bright and open,” says Hamori.

On the floor of the living room is a white wool carpet designed by Margit that visually depicts a map of Budapest. “This carpet shows a map of the city, with the different districts rendered with different wool lengths. In the middle, where the river crosses the city, the Danube can be seen in blue wool. Along the blue strip is a little red dot, which marks the location of the flat itself,” says Szinger, who complemented the carpet with two 1980s bright yellow Girotondo armchairs.

The compact kitchen with streamlined hob, sink and discreet cabinetry, blends in with the rest of the white walls and floors. Under the stairs a cupboard was built to hide and store the washing machine, wine cooler,

microwave and kitchen appliances.

For the bedroom on this lower level, Hamori and Szinger designed a floating bed and curved cabinet. In the guest bathroom, a red radiator brings dynamism to the space, while a giant mirror enlarges it. In the dining area a Leolux table, surrounded by Kartell chairs creates a composition that reminds one of a flower with bright red petals.

On the upper level, the master bedroom and guestroom are equipped with numerous storage spaces hidden behind sliding doors. Also located on this level is a little guest area, with a work desk and windows that provide views of the river.

“Our optimism, love and life are what inspire our design process. With this apartment, the white background allows us to use bold colours. This allows the decor to define the mood, and the loose furniture and accessories can be easily changed to reflect the preferences of a new owner,” says Hamori.

“We found our own style. Many people tell us that that they can recognise our apartments, as it differs from both the minimalistic and the colourful bohemian styles often found in the cities of Hungary,” says Szinger. ■

margeza.com