

Crowning glory

Built atop a former customs house on the banks of the Rhine in Cologne, this family home rethinks loft style

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Exterior The new two-storey structure with its metal façade sits on top of a historic customs hall in the Rheinauhafen district of Cologne ▶

Living room An olive-coloured clay plaster from Claytec was applied to all walls and ceilings, the untreated surface revealing its natural straw content. The upholstery of the 'Lennon' sofa by Westwing is harmoniously coordinated with the colour of the walls and rubber floor. It's piled with cushions from Pad, H&M Home and Design House Stockholm, with a blanket from David Fussenegger. The small black tray table is from Hay and the 'Lampe Gras' wall light is from DCW Editions



The bureaucratic setting of a former customs house is not the first place you would look for innovation and fresh thinking, but architecture practice **DIIP** is not known for sticking to conventions. It has created a truly extraordinary structure wrapped in shimmering aluminium. Set back slightly from the original building's exterior, the two-storey addition is flanked by two terraces, with another on its roof.

'For us, less is often more, and timelessness is more consistent than any trend,' says Jochen Reetz, the studio's founder. Together with homeowners Edwin and Melissa, he masterminded a total renovation, using sustainable materials that would age well and could be easily repaired. Plenty of storage and flexibility were also essential elements, intended to allow room for the couple and their young family to grow.

Jochen chose to place the bedrooms and bathrooms on the entrance floor, with the living and dining areas, kitchen and home office flowing into each other on the upper level. Across these spaces and roof terrace above, a simple, restrained material palette of timber, clay plaster and natural rubber creates cohesion. All the custom joinery –



cupboards, benches, bunks and more – was made by a carpenter using silver fir, a locally sourced timber. The knot-free grain of the wood creates a feeling of calm spaciousness, even in the rather narrow entrance hallway.

The calm is purposefully broken, however, by the glowing, glossy orange staircase. A deliberate contrast to the otherwise natural tones of the interior, it becomes this home's vivid central core. Echoes of the neon hue are playfully placed around the house, on everything from taps to candleholders.

With unexpected transitions and lightwells, this is a house that is full of surprises, but the best 'wow' moment of all is waiting for anyone who climbs the stairs to the rooftop terrace. Ascend and you are rewarded with a breathtaking view of the river, with its passing ships, and the lush green meadows that stretch out from the opposite bank. diip.net

Kitchen Made from locally sourced silver fir, the cabinetry is bespoke. Set within a matte-black alcove is the sink, complete with tomato-red Vola tap, and stove, all lit by articulated 'Lampe Gras' lights from DCW Editions

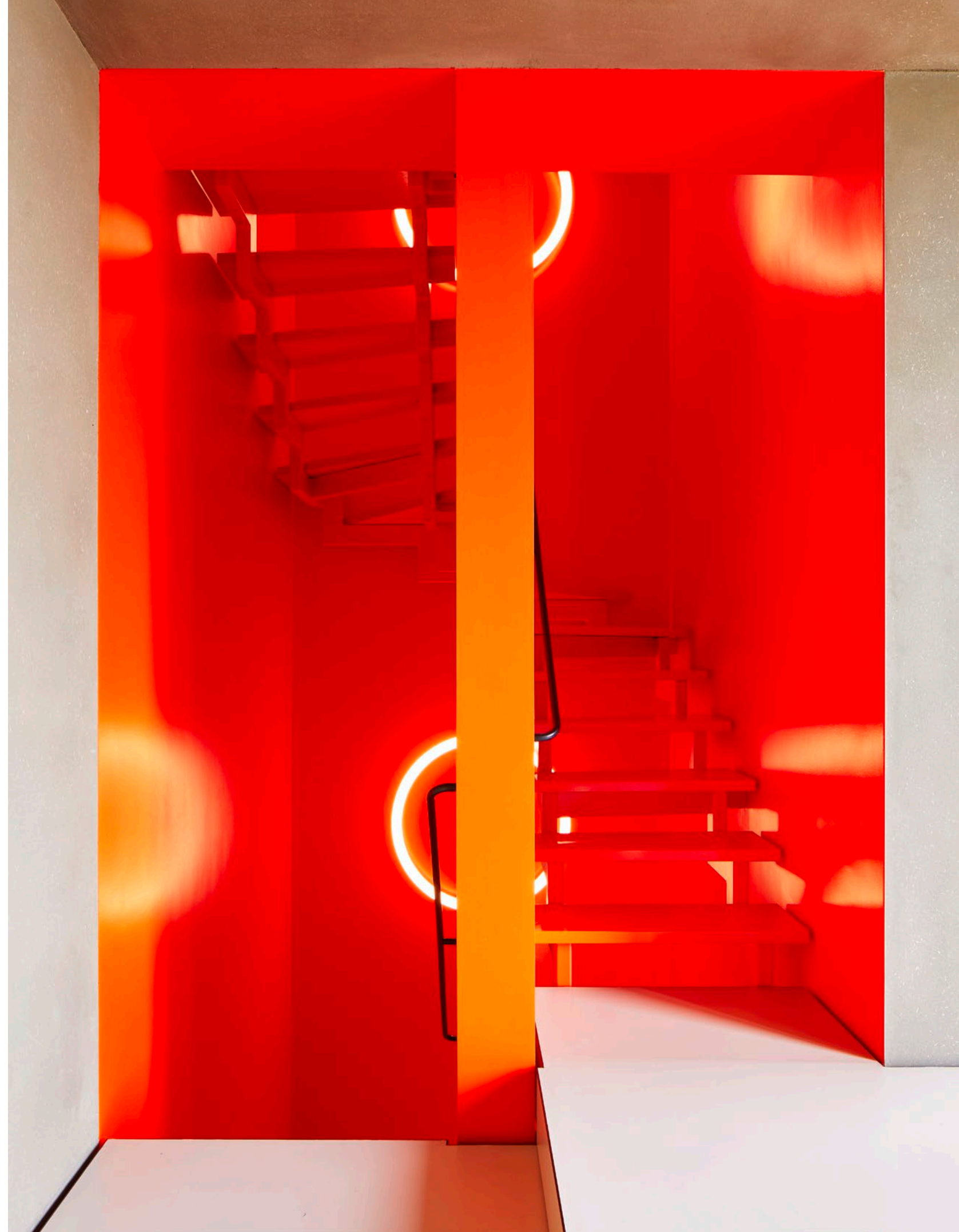
Portrait Homeowners Edwin and Melissa beside one of the picture windows overlooking the river ►



The knot-free grain of the silver fir creates a feeling of calm spaciousness

Dining room The sky-blue lacquered table was made to measure by a carpenter, as was the bench, which is upholstered in an egg yolk-yellow Kvadrat fabric. Hans J Wegner's 'CH24 Wishbone' chairs for Carl Hansen & Søn complete the dining set-up. Illumination comes from three 'Les Acrobates de Gras No. 322' pendants by DCW Editions and a 'VP3' table lamp by Verner Panton for &Tradition ▶

Home office A corner next to the central staircase was turned into a workspace with custom silver-fir joinery and an 'S43' chair by Mart Stam for Thonet. **Stairwell** In contrast to the rest of the home's calm hues, the stairwell punches through the three levels in a vivid orangey-red (RAL 2004). A column runs continuously from the entrance floor to the ceiling of the terrace and serves as a support for the handrail. The lighting is the 'Alphabet of Light' by BIG for Artemide ▶





Child's bedroom This airy, playful space is home to child-sized design classics like the mini 'Togo' chair by Michel Ducaroy for Ligne Roset along with a 'Miffy' lamp by Mr Maria and Eero Aarnio's jolly 'Puppy' for Magis, while a pair of 'Eyes' rugs from CYL add a cartoony touch. The bed is the 'Kasva' by Wookids

Bathroom Walls are covered in Mutina's black 'Teknomosaico' tiles and the lights above the sinks are DCW Editions' 'Lampe Gras No. 304'. The bright-red Vola tap that has been paired with the 'Cree' tub from Vallone is a reference to the vibrant stairs at the heart of this home ▶





The neon hue of the staircase can be seen playfully echoed around the house on everything from taps to candleholders

Bathroom A sliding steel and glass wall creates a fluid boundary between the bathroom and the main bedroom. More orange Vola taps can be seen above the double basin **Bedroom** The silver-fir surfaces of the bed, shelves and built-in cupboards create a sense of calm cohesion in this tranquil space. The bedding is from Westwing, and on the windowsill stand a pair of 'Bole' candleholders by Lex Pott for Buro Berger – another playful nod to the colourful thread that links the spaces **See Stockists page for details** 