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## Industrial Soul

Luca MF Fabris

Home and studio coexist in this apartment in the heart of Tokyo, where a couple of young architects – HAMS and, Studio – has created a scenic sequence of spaces and functions. Making the most of the fascination of the existing structures

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‘Value-added renovation’ is a familiar concept in Italy, but a highly unusual one in Japan, where demolition and reconstruction are preferred to refurbishment. The architects Yota Hokibara and Tomoyo Hokibara – in their thirties and the founders of HAMS and, Studio – have pinned their colours to this concept, and have applied it to two apartments originally intended for their own use. Their research, says Yota, has led them to “a design that makes people want to live in the place and increases the value of the property,” bearing in mind that a home is not forever, but should reflect the conditions and expectations of the moment. With the first flat, measuring just 60 square metres and bought on a small budget (finished in 2019 and sold in 2021 after being published many times in Japan), they had designed a home for a young couple. Now with the second, 90-square-metre one, completed in 2022, they have tackled the theme of work, creating a space that is at once a home, a studio and a showroom.



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The choice, conditioned by the financial resources at their disposal, fell on an apartment that needed renovation in Setagaya, one of the districts in the centre of Tokyo, that struck the architects with the height of its ceilings, exceeding the standard 2.40 metres, and its load-bearing structure, consisting of a powerful framework of reinforced concrete, now left open to view. The apartment also had eight large windows and a vast amount of natural light, although its plan was typologically absurd and the surrounding buildings almost brushed against it. The project started out from a double premise: the desire both to rationalize the space and to keep the rest of the world out of this perfect setting. And this was the idea the architects came up with: the space has been reorganized in concentric rings that originate from the large living area – comprising kitchen, dining room, living room and showroom – enclosed ideally by the steel runner hanging from the ceiling, a double track that contains a tube of LEDs. At its edge there are on one side the two study areas (one of which, enclosed in a blue volume, is also a walk-in wardrobe), and on the other the bedroom, hidden by a sliding wall, the bathroom, the entrance and a storeroom.

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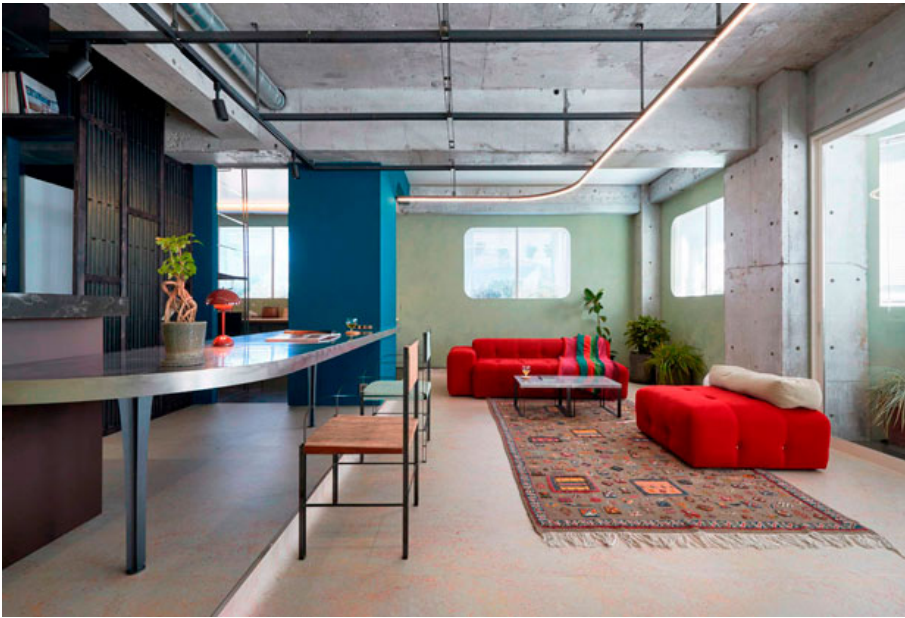


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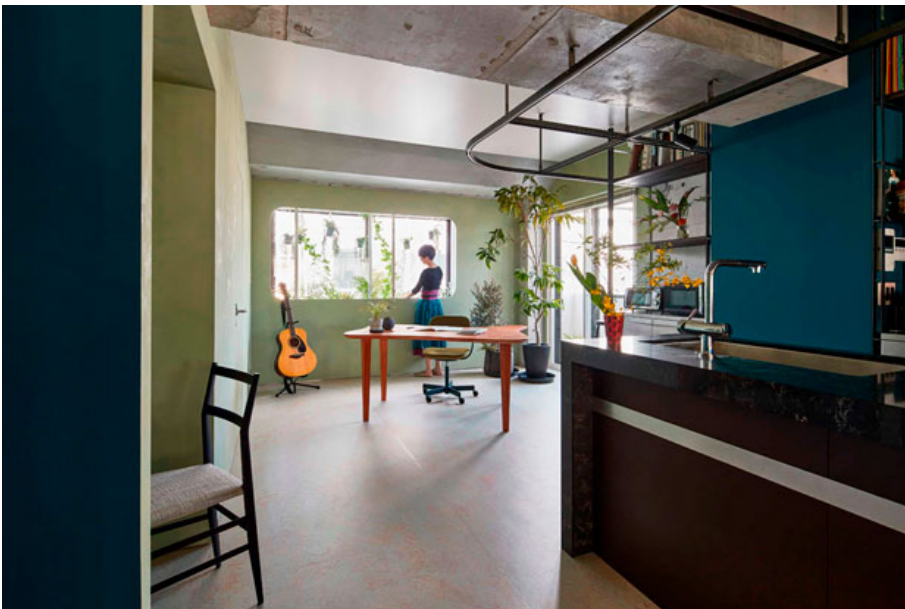


### Grow Together



The lounge, furnished with Barcarolle sofas from Cibone and a carpet bought in Morocco, occupies one of the corners of the living area. (ph. Akira Nakamura)

To soften the impact of the raw concrete structure, the architects have ‘set’ walls of pale green plasterboard in it that round off the corners of the windows, giving the space a futuristic and industrial touch, in line with the shape of the metal structure on the ceiling and the exposed installations. In addition to the false walls and the windows there is also room for many pot plants. The last ring that delimits the apartment, in fact, is that of chlorophyll: a filtering screen, a small forest laid out between terrace and windows, useful in protecting against prying eyes but also an energy buffer, as it helps to cool the spaces. “We think we have created a versatile space, in which the home coexists happily with the studio,” conclude the Hokibaras, who in this interesting “ring-a-ring-o-roses” have also put the furniture they designed themselves on show.



The showroom with the Spugna table of solid walnut designed by Yoto Hokibara. The green wall serves as a frame for the plants located around the large openings. (ph. Akira Nakamura)

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