

# TALES OF SUBURBIA

Convinced there's no mileage in a 30s suburban pile? Think again. With a little help from an architect, some brown-grey paint and a scattering of graphic lines, it can be transformed into a sleek, well-organised and modern home. By Anna Lambert Styling Reini Smit Photographer Hotze Eisma/Taverne Agency



**THIS PAGE:** Marie-Louise Bas's granite kitchen worktops were left unpolished for a matt finish, while the French oak floor was bleached for a faded look.  
**OPPOSITE:** SOAP Ateliers designed the fabric wardrobe 'doors' in the main bedroom, and mural artists Trojka (00 31 2 04 06 54 06) painted 'Kast' (Dutch for cupboard) on them.



Kast

## THE OWNERS

Jan and Marie-Louise Bas live just outside Eindhoven in southwest Holland with their sons, Daan, 15, Freek, 13, and Max, three. Jan is an orthodontist-technician and Marie-Louise works for Ter Tafel, an Eindhoven-based tableware, home furnishings and accessories shop that also offers an interior design service. She has worked there for six years alongside the store's owner, Astrid Jeulink. Marie-Louise defines her own style as 'under- rather than over-decorated – a mix of old and new.' ▷

**THIS PAGE:** son Max in the living room, looking out onto the terrace. The sofas, surrounding a reclaimed-wood table, are from Ter Tafel! (00 31 4 02 46 63 09).  
**OPPOSITE, ABOVE:** the living room has underfloor heating to keep tootsies warm.  
**OPPOSITE, BELOW:** the plain exterior of the house gives little hint of the modern look inside.





**It's an all-too-familiar problem:** you find a house, fall in love with it and move in, expecting to live happily ever after. Eight years later and your family has expanded, your needs have changed. But your love affair with the house is still hot and heavy. The solution? Call an architect and have a rethink. Which is what Marie-Louise Bas decided to do when it came to the home she shares with her husband, Jan, and three sons Daan, Freek and Max. Situated just outside the industrial city of Eindhoven in Holland, the house simply had too much going for it to be abandoned. 'It's got character, and the location is good – handy for work, yet away from the city centre. Plus the garden's great for the boys,' says Marie-Louise.

In need of the architectural equivalent of a Relate counsellor, Marie-Louise turned to architect Sacha Winkel of SOAP Ateliers, a young Rotterdam-based design group whose work she had admired in a friend's house. 'Sacha's young, practical and makes me laugh. And our views matched on nearly everything,' she says. The plan was to gain more space wherever possible and, if not, to create the illusion of it. The family wanted to use part of the garden for a new kitchen and build a main bedroom above it, with an en suite so the boys could use the existing bathroom as their own. On the outside, the style of the house had to stay true to its 30s origins, but inside they could go for an individual, contemporary look.

Building work took a year to complete. For half the time the family decamped to granny's place ('She was on holiday in New Zealand, so that worked out well'), and for the rest, they explored the gypsies in their souls. 'We lived in a caravan in a nearby park – an experience that, thank God, the boys adored,' says Marie-Louise.

With the family reinstalled, the furnishing was largely down to her. 'I just can't live with too much stuff – life's complicated enough as it is – so I'm always editing things down,' she says. As for colour, it was a case of white, white and more white. 'But not *only* white,' she points out. On selected walls, she has used a 'special paint', best described as a sort of Galaxy chocolate colour, mixed with plenty of dark grey, because: 'I like the modern look, but I also want my rooms to be timeless – with an elegant-but-approachable feel.'

In Marie-Louise's tiny study, it's not just the chocolatey wall that warms things up, but a cerise lampshade >





**THIS PAGE:** the study reveals Marie-Louise's taste in bright accessories, which 'add splashes of colour' against the serene, brownish-grey wall

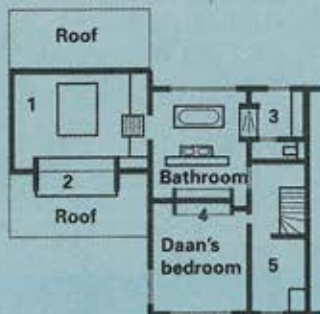
**OPPOSITE:** the three sons have their own place (two shown) at the trough-style granite basin. The 'Tara' taps are from Dornbracht (01444 473 355; [www.dornbracht.com](http://www.dornbracht.com)).





**GROUND FLOOR:**

1) living room; 2) WC; 3) stairs to cellar; 4) entrance



**FIRST FLOOR:**

1) main bedroom; 2) balcony; 3) children's bathroom and shower room; 4) cupboard; 5) Daan and Max's bedroom

that 'glows fabulously at night' and a couple of silver-painted chairs upholstered in jewel-bright pinks. And in the kitchen, the main wall has been livened up with a cutlery mural designed by SOAP Ateliers. 'It's just the kind of quirky detail I love,' says Marie-Louise. 'It stops everything from becoming too predictable. The design was drawn straight onto the plaster, then painted there and then. It must have taken about a day.'

The kitchen may have its idiosyncratic touches, but first and foremost it's a practical space. There's a big central sink and a roomy seating area, while tall cupboard doors in lacquered MDF slide back into the wall for easy access to food and utensils. 'We could have them open all the time, but the insides are too messy,' confesses Marie-Louise – reassuring news, given that the rest of the kitchen looks so pristine. Work surfaces are made from tough, easy-clean granite and special touches such as a tiny sink and tap next to the cooker are beloved by the family. 'The sink was one of Sacha's ideas – the sort of thing you don't realise you need until it's there. If I want to mop up spills or cool a bottle of wine, it really comes in handy,' says Marie-Louise.

Upstairs, the pared-down but practical look continues. In Daan's new bedroom – complete with skateboard graphic on the wall – a plastic chest of drawers, designed by SOAP Ateliers, neatly avoids the problem of trying to fit ready-made pieces into awkward corners. ('Also, he can just chuck all his kit into them and I don't have to look at it!'). Finally, there's Marie-Louise and Jan's en suite, a bathroom solely for the boys and a shared 'kids-and-parents' shower room connecting the two.

'We've all got our own spaces now, which is exactly what we wanted in the first place,' says Marie-Louise. So will she be putting up her decorating feet? 'There are still a few things I'm looking for. The odd accessory, perhaps some pictures – the kind of stuff you're not going to find overnight. But, as the boys keep telling me, they're quite happy with the house. So if I want to go on decorating, I'll be doing it on my own.'

**DECO**

*Ter Tafel! is at Vestdijk 20, 5611 CC Eindhoven (00 31 4 02 46 63 09). For architectural, graphic design or product development projects, contact Sacha Winkel at SOAP Ateliers, Voorhaven 19, 3025 HC Rotterdam (00 31 1 02 21 08 66; [www.soapateliers.com](http://www.soapateliers.com)).*



**THIS PAGE:** steps (shown in the foreground) lead up from the main bedroom to the en suite and have handy drawers tucked underneath  
**OPPOSITE:** skateboard fanatic son Daan's bedroom, with its mural and plastic storage system (made by Louter, 00 31 70 361 5413), both designed by SOAP Ateliers