

Living and working areas, and all other spaces, flow effortlessly into each other in KARLA MENTEN's Hidden Loft in Hasselt.

SPARTAN QUARTERS

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EVERYTHING NEEDED FOR WORKING OR LIVING IS HIDDEN
AWAY BEHIND (OR INSIDE) THE WALLS WHEN NOT REQUIRED.



THE ZEN-LIKE, MEDITATIVE ENVIRONMENT CONCEALS WHAT ISN'T IMMEDIATELY NEEDED AND ELIMINATES VISUAL DISTRACTIONS.

HIDDEN LOFT HAS FOUR AREAS FILLING DIFFERENT FUNCTIONS: A KITCHEN AND DINING ROOM, AN OFFICE, A BEDROOM AND LIVING SPACE, AND A SPA AND BATHROOM AREA.



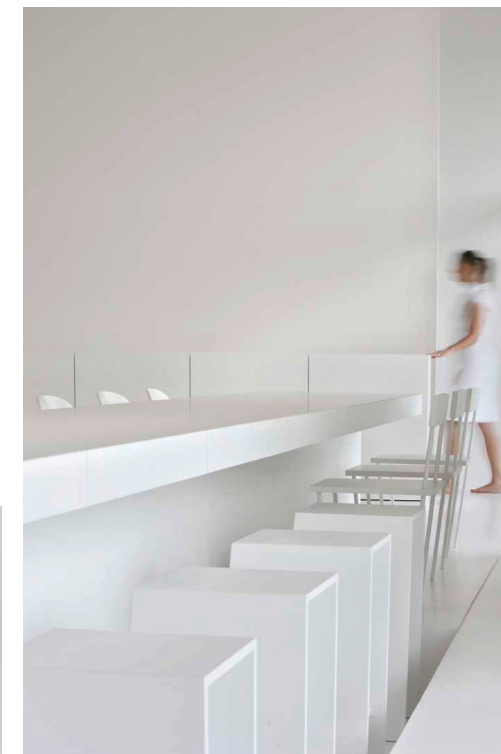
'(Away from it all) here, there and everywhere' – a Statement by American conceptual artist Lawrence Weiner (1942) – provided architect Karla Menten with a source of inspiration for the design of her Hidden Loft: Beyond Minimalism, the name of her office-cum-residence in Hasselt, Belgium. Ironically, the serenity-seeking architect lives in a building formerly occupied by Belgacom, the country's main telecommunication company.

Menten created the space not only as an exercise in design but also as a place that allows her to function at an optimum level. The almost sterile character of the loft allows her to clear the cobwebs from her brain and sit in silence, gathering inspiration. Menten's projects often represent choices that may not seem evident to the observer.

Here, too, she made a conscious decision to take the path less chosen.

The 240-m² space in which she lives and works is crafted from Gyproc cladding, polyurethane, pearl-blasted stainless steel and Corian, complemented by Ingo Maurer-designed lighting and flooring by Bolidt. Three extra-large volumes in the high, white space 'conceal what isn't immediately necessary, eliminate visual distractions and quadruple the spatial effectiveness', according to the architect, who says that everything needed to live and work 'is hidden behind or inside' when not in use.

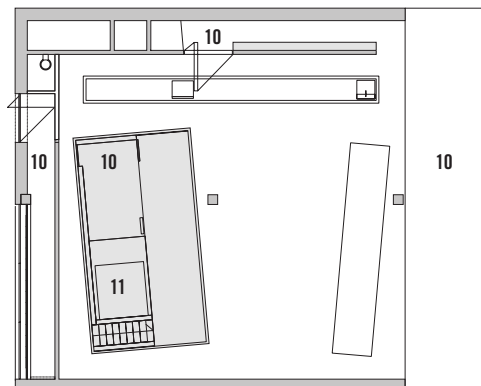
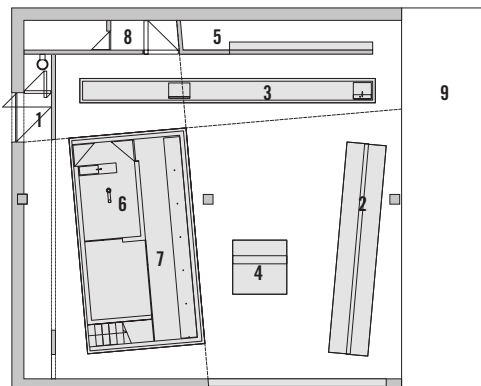
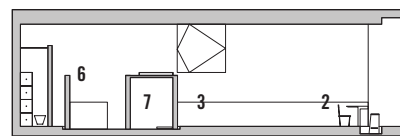
Designed as four rooms in one, the interior has what she describes as 'an elementally ethereal aesthetic'. Three aspects of the design are vital to its success, the first >>>



CONTEMPORARY MATERIALS, CUSTOM FURNITURE, AND PURITY IN EVERY DETAIL CREATE A 'MORE-THAN-MINIMAL' SPACE.

'My loft is a proposal for a 21st-century machine for living'

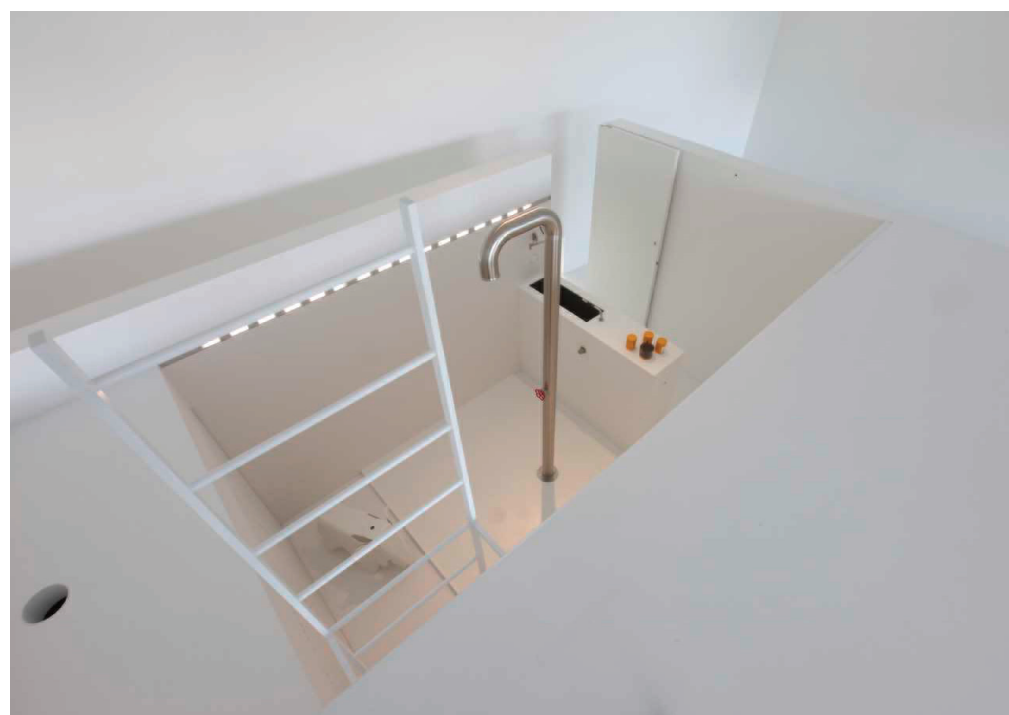
KARLA MENTEN



**FLOOR PLANS AND SECTION
OF THE OFFICE-CUM-RESIDENCE.**

1. ENTRANCE
2. TABLE
3. KITCHEN
4. SEAT
5. LIBRARY
6. BATHROOM
7. WALK-IN-CLOSET
8. STORAGE
9. TERRACE
10. VOID
11. PLATFORM

CONTAINED IN A WHITE CUBE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SPACE,
THE BATHROOM IS ACCESSED VIA A LADDER AT THE FRONT
AND A DOOR AT THE BACK.



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being the retention of open space: too often, the occupant of a loft is overcome by an urge to subdivide that cannot be suppressed. The second is a minimum of colour. White dominates the space without question, interrupted only here and there by a touch of black or blue. Third is the presence of several large volumes within the space, including a table, a kitchen counter for the preparation and cooking of meals, and a Menten-designed seating area.

The obvious choice would have been to position these elements symmetrically with respect to one another and to the walls, but Menten avoided the temptation, placing all elements slightly asymmetrically and, by doing so, creating narrow areas and openings throughout the interior. The project is absolute

and spare, neatly pared to the bone.

The result is a 'more-than-minimal space' created through purity of detail and Menten's use of up-to-date materials and custom-made furniture. Or, as she puts it: 'My loft is a proposal for a 21st-century machine for living.' Averse to any sort of fuss and decoration, Menten insists that 'retreat invokes more than escape: we retreat to contemplate, reflect and create, to harness the creativity and focus we sometimes lack'.

WITH THE WALLS AND FLOOR A BLANK CANVAS, THE LIGHTING CREATES
A COOL WHITE DAYTIME SPACE THAT THE RECESSED HALOGEN SPOTS
(BY INGO MAURER) TURN INTO WARM INTIMACY BY EVENING.