

UP ON THE ROOF

Can brutalism feel soft? In the dense heart of Mexico City's Escandón neighbourhood, Dutch studio Barde van Voltt has proven that even a home of concrete and steel can offer a sense of relief.

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The living room forms the heart of the penthouse, where soft plaster walls and bold volumes create a calm backdrop for the iconic *Ca-maleonda* sofa by B&B Italia.

The space breathes tranquillity, despite its urban context. On the wall hangs *Bijlen* by Ana de la Cueva (Mexico, 2008) and *Homo Habilis* by Romeo Gómez López (2022).



In the kitchen, walnut wood, natural stone, and stainless steel come together in an understated composition. Open shelves provide space for everyday objects and bring warmth to the design.



The custom-made bar cabinet, executed in walnut and natural stone, adds a discreet moment of elegance to the room.

“In the Netherlands, you live much more towards the outside. Here, it felt almost like a luxury to let that go.” Valérie Boerma, Barde vanVoltt

The dining room is bathed in light from floor-to-ceiling windows. Surrounding the bespoke table are chairs and benches by Labó Estudio, with *Maro* suspended lamp by Nuumbra Studio hanging overhead. The artwork is by Federico Jordan.



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and something that lets you slow
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The staircase, with its
black steel balustrade,
introduces a graphic
accent within the soft
material palette of
wood and plaster.





In the bathroom, stone, glass, and wood form a sculptural composition. The round glass shower follows the soft lines of the bedroom.



The custom-designed dressing room functions as a personal space where clothing, objects, and rituals converge.



The bedroom feels like a quiet cocoon, featuring curved wooden panels and an integrated platform bed. The lighting is provided by *Bed lights Santa 63* by Nuumbra Studio.



The long hallway, clad in stainless steel, catches the light as it moves through the penthouse throughout the day.

For founders Valérie Boerma and Bart van Seggelen, this Brutalist penthouse project was born from a need to create a deliberate counterweight to urban roar. “Mexico City is intense and sometimes almost chaotic,” Boerma reflects. “Precisely because of that, we wanted to make a place where you can land”.

The project was a deeply collaborative process, shaped by the distinct creative lives of its inhabitants: fashion designer Tony Domínguez Gonzalez and writer Rafael Fajer. From the outset, the brief called for an atmosphere of calm. This vision extended to the couple’s two dogs, Gomez and Gigi; the designers gently softened the staircase incline to accommodate one of the pets, who is partially paralysed. “The house needed to be comfortable, safe, and intuitive for everyone living in it,” says Boerma.

At the home’s centre sits a stainless-steel core that absorbs the technical ‘noise’ of the elevator, staircase, and bar. By concealing these elements behind seamless surfaces, the living spaces remain visually calm. To ensure the metal reads as a gallery feature rather than a cold kitchen, the designers made sure to guide the harsh Mexican sun across concrete walls and catch the warmth of the walnut carpentry at sunset. “We paid a lot of attention to what happens around it – wood, textiles, light,” Boerma explains. “Because of that, the steel doesn’t feel cold, but rather like a contrast that makes the rest warmer.”

Building this sanctuary required the designers to trade European factory perfection for a philosophy of trust. They embraced what they called “happy accidents” from local artisans, like subtle imperfections in the plasterwork that bring the surfaces to life. “In the beginning you want to correct that, but often it turns out to be more beautiful,” Boerma notes. This human touch carries through to the furniture, from the “dream piece” *Camaleonda* sofa to a custom dining table with a raw, scorched finish, handcrafted by Mexican artisans.

For Boerma and Van Seggelen, the project marks a departure from their roots. While the Dutch are famously a ‘curtains open’ culture, this home reworks the idea of the private courtyard, favouring an introspective H-shaped layout that shuts out the street. “In the Netherlands, you live much more towards the outside,” Boerma explains. “Here, it felt almost like a luxury to let that go.” Ultimately, the home serves as a bridge between their northern sensibilities and their future in the Mexican landscape “What remains is how we look at spaces,” she concludes. “We always aim for rest, balance, and something that lets you slow down.”

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Owners Tony Domínguez and Rafael Fajer with their two dogs, Gomez and Gigi, in their living room.

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The roof terrace and
plunge pool offer an
unexpectedly quiet spot
above the vibrant city.



On the roof terrace,
an outdoor kitchen
complete with Big
Green Egg seamlessly
extends the interior to
the outside.