

/ WORDS SASHA GONZALES

TAKE IT INSIDE

The interior of this apartment in Gdansk, Poland is inspired by the stunning views that it looks out to. At the same time, its designer perfectly integrated the city's classical elements into it.



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The wall panels and wooden parquet floors are reminiscent of those found in Gdansk's old manors and merchant houses.



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Natural fabrics, like nubuck leather and linen, give the apartment a warm, luxurious vibe.

Gdansk, a city on the Baltic coast of Poland, is steeped in tradition. For the last 1,000 years, it has been one of the country's main seaports, greeting trading vessels and travellers and functioning as an important centre of commerce.

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Today, this picturesque city is a traveller's delight, thanks to its cathedrals, museums and townhouses, many of which date back hundreds of years, and its shop- and restaurant-lined pedestrian street called Long Market, which was established in the 13th century.

Such landmarks were a huge source of inspiration for Paulina Czurak when she designed this apartment in the heart of

Gdansk. But the amazing views from the fourth-floor residence were not enough for the Polish architect; she felt compelled to bring the outside in.

“The view from the apartment is simply breath-taking,” says Czurak, who is also the owner of IDEOGRAF Architectural Studio in Sopot, Poland.

“There are all these medieval structures and historical features that instantly transport you back to the past when you look at them. I thought, wouldn't it be great if we could incorporate these elements, as well as the classical vibe of the city, into the design of the apartment?”

CONNECTING WITH HISTORY

Czurak's first point of reference was the city's famous St. Mary's Church, completed in 1502. In designing the apartment's front corridor, she chose a white marble floor, which she says is typical of the flooring of old churches.

She was also drawn to the mesmerising patterns of the church's stellar vault and decided to translate this feature to the corridor floor by way of interesting geometric divisions.

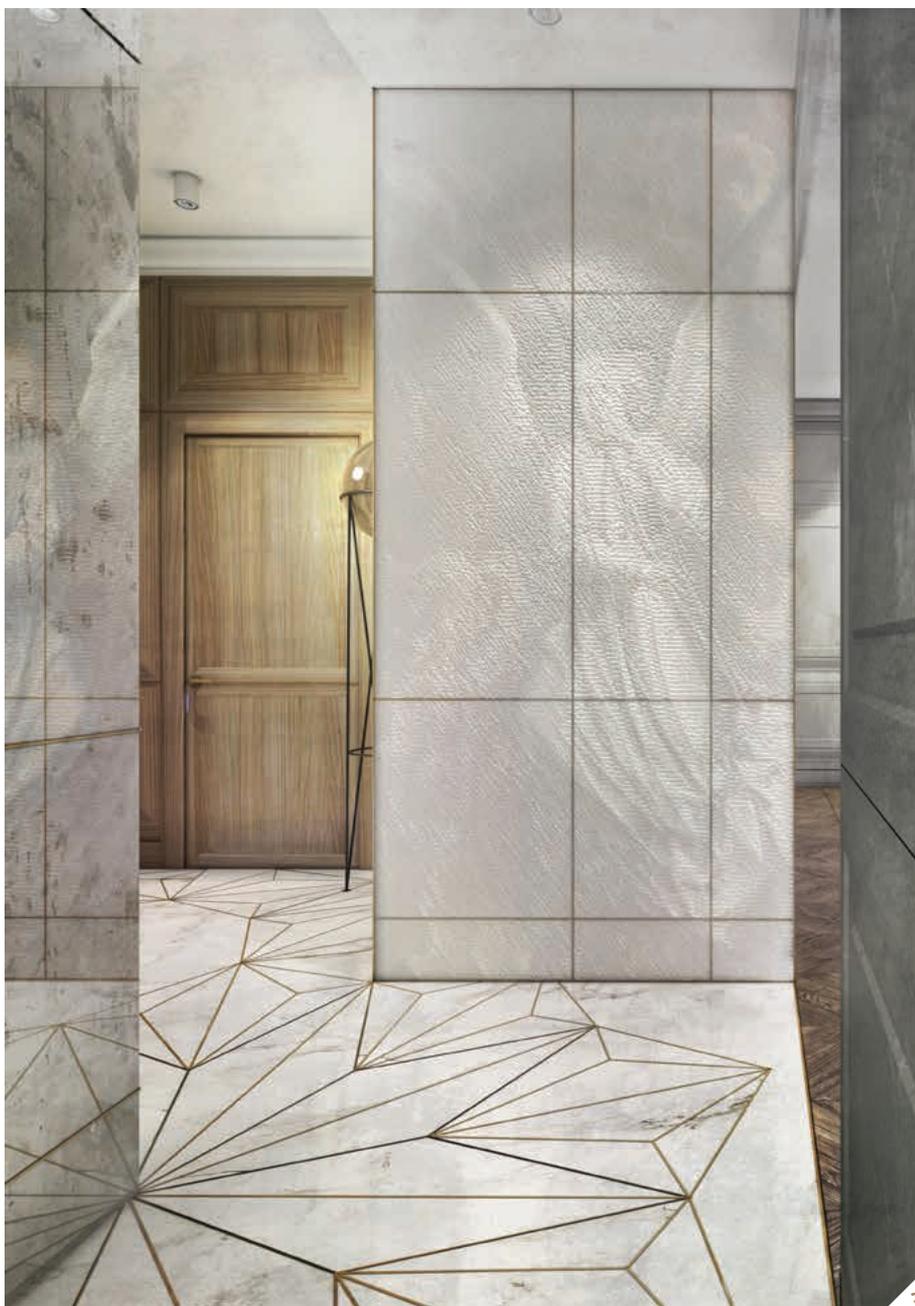


"But we did not stop there," says Czurak. "Standing at the front door, you'll also notice that the exposed wall fragment is covered with a relief depicting a part of The Last Judgement, a painting by the German painter Hans Memling.

"This valuable painting, which was done in the 1400s, is closely connected with Gdansk and was once displayed in St. Mary's Church. It now hangs in the National Museum in Gdansk."

Moving from the corridor to the living room, the floor changes from marble to wooden parquet – a material that was often seen in the homes of wealthy merchants in the 17th and 18th centuries. The wall panels in the living room also draw inspiration from the panelled walls of the city's manors and merchant houses.

In the bathroom, a custom-made mosaic wall displays a picture of Neptune, the Roman God of the Sea. The statue that



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The city's famous St Mary's Church inspired this white marble floor with its mesmerising geometric divisions.

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The apartment looks classic without being old-fashioned or kitschy, despite being inspired by buildings that date back several centuries.



inspired this design is located in Long Market, and features Neptune atop his own fountain.

“And finally, in the bedroom, you’ll notice the decorative panel at the head of the bed,” Czurak continues. “The grooved brass plates bring to mind the feather of a seagull, which you see just about everywhere in the city.”

TRADITIONAL MATERIALS AND NATURAL FABRICS

The use of certain materials and fabrics was, in Czurak’s words, “a return to the city’s roots”. Oak, for example, is not just beautiful and hardy; it was traditionally used by the Poles to make furniture and hardwood floors. And, like marble, its appearance improves with age.

Brass also features strongly in the apartment – a malleable metal with an attractive golden colour, it was used in

traditional ornamentation for millennia, and in recent years has become popular again.

“Fabrics were important to give the apartment warmth,” says Czurak. “We chose natural fabrics that embodied a sense of luxury – think sofas in veneered and nubuck leather, satin curtains and linen duvet covers. These materials were also commonly traded along the Hanseatic Route, which Gdansk was a part of.”

CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY

It wasn’t easy striking the perfect balance between old and new. After all, with so many historical and traditional elements to take into account, there was a risk that the apartment would end up looking like the inside of a Baroque church. That’s why moderation was key to Czurak’s project.

GDANSK WATERFRONT APARTMENT

LOCATION / GDANSK, POLAND
COMPLETION / 2018
SITE AREA / 80M²
INTERIOR DESIGN / IDEOGRAF
CONTRACTOR / DEKPOL



"It was important for us to avoid excess or extremes," she explains. "So, when we looked at classical European motifs that we could translate into a modern design, we made sure the proportions were right.

"Take the bedroom walls, for example – in order to maintain their classical character, but also give them a modern touch, we repeated the characteristic division of the classical decoration, expressing it in a simplified and geometric version."

Czurak adds that such a balance should

also be sought when it comes to materials and the technology used to make them. "In this project, we used classic elements on the walls and in the finishing elements, while the modern aspect came through in the way these classic elements were designed and produced.

"Moderation is definitely the most important design rule when it comes to working on a space like this," she concludes. "It's the one thing that can stop you from creating something that is stuffy and old-fashioned or kitschy."



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The mosaic wall in the bathroom features a picture of Neptune, the Roman God of the Sea. The statue that inspired this design is located in the nearby Long Market.

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The pattern on the feature wall is inspired by seagull feathers; the birds are permanent residents of Gdansk.