

# open heart

Playful touches and original details bring personality to an old dairy warehouse conversion


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**lofty heights**  
After their first visit in July 2007, Emilie and David (pictured) knew this former dairy warehouse had the potential to become their new family home. This far rear section of the property was knocked down and rebuilt as a kitchen and dining area with plenty of light filtering through from the inner courtyard. The entertaining space is a study in simplicity, with an all-white galley kitchen. The pendant lights are recycled from a warehouse in Ostend, which were sandblasted and repainted white.  
**Tip: No pantry? Try recessed wall shelves with a sliding door for a handy storage spot.**

## cheat sheet

**Who lives here:** Photographer Emilie Vercruyse; her husband, David de Behr, head of global events at power company Aggreko; daughters Rosie Lou and Miu, and a baby due at time of print; plus the family goldfish, Blubje.  
**Style of house:** A '30s dairy warehouse in the Belgian city of Ghent, which is now a modern loft-style house with three bedrooms and a photo studio.

 The renovation took five years to complete. The first phase was demolishing the back section to create a new kitchen and dining zone, living area and David's office.



## 2 blank canvas

White stucco meets smooth concrete in this bright, uncluttered living space. "I wanted a large space with few frills and lots of daylight, where everything is movable and flexible," says Emilie. "We can create a new look by changing a few small elements, which is why we chose the fewest possible materials and painted everything white." A B&B Italia 'Tufty Time' sofa by Patricia Urquiola dominates the room with an extra cosy touch courtesy of some Hay cushions.

**Tip: Play with scale to add interest to an all-white look. This large sofa is offset by a small inset shelf.**

## 3 photo finish

Emilie (pictured with David and Rosie Lou) specialises in children's portraiture and this is where she does her work.

"At first, we planned to locate the studio at the rear of the building because of the height," says Emilie. "But clients would've had to walk through the living quarters so we put it at the front. That was my biggest surprise - the beautiful transition between the old part of the house and the new."

**Tip: Useful elements can be decorative. In this studio, rolls of coloured paper backdrops become an interchangeable feature wall.**



## 4 raising the bar

The couple worked on the project with architect Francisca Hautekeete, who is also a close friend. "She knows us pretty well," says David. "So, she could convert our sometimes wild ideas into a more tangible project." In this transitional zone, the Dario Alfonsi leather chair was bought in Rome; Emilie and David picked out the leather and it was made to order. The vintage spiral staircase leads to David's mezzanine office.

**Tip: A see-through staircase is another opportunity to display art or a styled vignette.**

ARTWORK: EMILIE VERCRUYSE

"I wanted a large space with few frills and lots of daylight, where everything is movable and flexible"

EMILIE VERCRUYSE, HOMEOWNER





## 5 work in progress

To allow Emilie to work from home, the second phase of converting the dairy into a residence tackled her studio. The floor-to-ceiling maple-wood cupboard houses Emilie's many props for her photography work. "We wander through charity shops and junk markets a lot," says Emilie. "And my mother has quite an extensive collection in her attic so, when I need something, I simply visit her and ultimately her stuff moves over to us." Adds David, "The apple does not fall far from the tree."

**Tip: Make transitional spaces functional by adding streamlined storage.**



## 6 straight & narrow

This hallway is the entry to both Emilie and David's home and the photo studio. The couple combined two separate areas by converting the original garage, removing a wall to create a larger space for the studio. A row of colourful paper rolls act as backdrops for her unique children's portraits and forms an inviting feature. A custom-made sliding barn door harks back to the home's dairy days and conceals the studio.

**Tip: A sliding barn door is ideal for keeping an open feel, while also adding an industrial look.**

ARTWORK: EMILIE VERCRUYSE

## 7 creative pursuit

The well-loved drawer cabinet in the studio is from Emilie's father. "He was an interior decorator and kept all his smaller materials in there." Emilie and David discovered the floor tiles under carpet. "We loved them and worked hard to get them back into a good state," says Emilie. "When we got to the end, we discovered that an old chimney had damaged some of the tiles." The pair ended up painting the floor to match the concrete.

**Tip: Industrial storage matches the concrete floor and exposed piping of the space.**



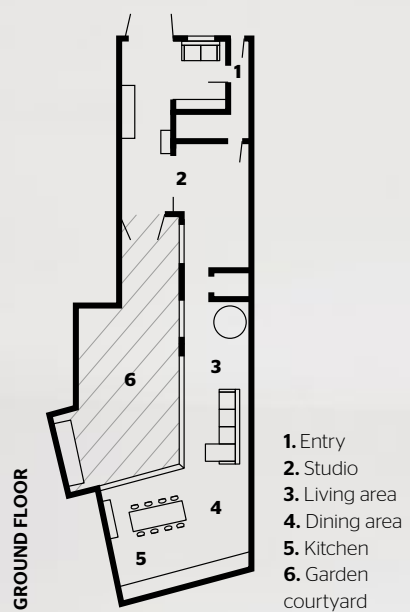
"We lived here for two years before the renovation, so we were able to develop a plan"

EMILIE VERCRUYSE, HOMEOWNER


## 8 take the floor

The mezzanine level is home to a dressing room, Rosie Lou's drum kit and David's enviable office. An expanse of floor-to-ceiling white combines with the natural light filtering through to keep an airy feel throughout the floor. "When I work from here, I have a beautiful view of the garden," says David. The nook just above the window now serves as a shelf for David's books. "The book niche was an idea from our architect Francisca," says Emilie.

**Tip: Timber accents and colourful touches save a white-on-white scheme from being clinical.**



## 9 lookout from above

From his office on the mezzanine floor, David gets a tranquil green-and-white outlook through large-format windows. A pair of old IKEA chairs sits on a concrete entry outside the photo studio. 

**Tip: If a landscaped garden is too much work, keep your yard design simple with a square patch of lawn that complements your home.**

To see Emilie's work, visit [emilievercruysse.be](http://emilievercruysse.be).

For more information on architect Francisca Hautekeete's projects, visit [hautekeete.be](http://hautekeete.be).