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LOFTS



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became associated with creative achievement and established a model on both sides of the Atlantic. Then, as Lewis says, 'intellectuals wanted to live in them too'. Modernist architects, led by Le Corbusier, developed the idea. As time went on, says Lewis, 'the Abstract Expressionists took this model and moved it into the loft', and the precedent was established. Now, often devoid of this historic context, the mezzanine is most used by developers as a way of adding 'visual interest', and gaining more space and thus value. For architects and occupiers, the mezzanine is simply as another familiar symbol of 'loftness'.

Once the plan and structure of a loft is complete, the business of finishes, fittings and furnishings comes into play. Most architects working on loft projects take the approach that materials and finishes should reflect the industrial origins of the building. As a result, a number of appropriate (but nevertheless stereotypical) fittings and finishes have developed as part of the language of loft living. Among these are the stripped wooden floor (sometimes solid or original, often a laminate imitation); stainless-steel kitchen and bathroom fittings and appliances; industrial light-fittings; and radiators. While architects and loft dwellers take great delight in sourcing new or second-hand fittings genuinely intended for industrial or contract



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Because of its converted status, the loft form often challenges designers to find new ways of solving problems. In Resolution: 4 Architecture's Potter's Pad of Planes, in New York's Chelsea district, light is brought into the kitchen and dining area via a series of 20 carefully composed bars of light, linked to four dimming controls that can be individually adjusted to suit the mood of the client.

use (hospital taps, prison WCs and heavy-duty flooring are among the most popular), many of the fittings made to look industrial have now been developed by suppliers with the particular intention of servicing the loft market.

Despite protestations from loft-lovers of the freedom offered by this domestic form, it is remarkable how tyrannical some can sound about appropriate furnishings for these spaces. As Ralph Ardill's earlier comment about his Le Corbusier sofas illustrates, classic modernist furnishings and their more economic contemporary substitutes – usually by Conran, Habitat or IKEA – have become staples of the loft look.

For Diane Lewis, there are clear reasons for this association. She sees the development of the loft in the direct lineage of the Modern Movement quest for a democratic and new way of living. As she says of her designs for apartments: 'There are no walls in my projects that are just walls. They absorb objects so that the space is left and you have a place to dream.' While some might see the results as austere, Lewis suggests the potential that the environment offers for 'peace inside, while you feel the city as a landscape around you'. To reinforce these modernist principles, she has furnished her loft with classic pieces by European exponents like Gerrit