

## io 3d in action

A visit to the house  
of the future

Matthias Horx is Germany's most renowned futurologist. In his »Future Evolution House« located in Vienna, where he lives with his wife, British author Oona Strathern-Horx, he tests out prototypes of the new of the new spotlight series io 3d. The bottom line: perfectly suited to the future!



**Smarthome:** Matthias Horx testing out a prototype in his home on the outskirts of Vienna, which is undergoing the latest tests for house and light technology.





»We very much like the modular system from Occhio. Our entire house is based on forms that can be combined.«

## THE PRESSING ISSUES OF TOMORROW ARE DESIGN ISSUES.

### **What will the future bring, Matthias Horx?**

Matthias Horx (MH): We are currently in a phase of awakening, where we are constantly made aware of how our systems aren't as sustainable as we want them to be. We are enveloped by so much nonsense and flooded by from an unbridled amount of cheap products. We definitely have to think much more about recycling and intelligent industrial design. The Future Evolution House, in which we're living in, is a first step.

### **Tell us a little bit about it.**

Oona Strathern-Horx (OS-H): When we moved into our house along the outskirts of Vienna, we were certain about not wanting a conceptual house, where the walls could talk to the refrigerators. We have a photovoltaic system on the rooftop and an electric car in the garage. Otherwise, it's simply about making life easier than it is. While moving, we brought half of the 12,000 things we had to Caritas. A cathartic process, indeed.

## FUNDAMENTALLY, ONE MUST REALISE THAT THE FUTURE DOESN'T LOOK MUCH DIFFERENT THAN THE PRESENT OR THE PAST.

### **Less is more?**

MH: Less is better. Material things clog the mental abilities. We live in an influx of electronic gadgets with a remarkably short half-life period. Still, we rely on technologies, which make daily living easier. A key example is my iPad; one doesn't need an alarm clock anymore. No more weather stations, radios, newspapers and journals – a real all-in-one device.

### **Doesn't a house require a few construction zones?**

MH: The philosopher and house owner always have something to repair. Life is a constant process of refurbishing and rearrangement. We have chosen an architecture, which portrays this through the long building, so that we and our children have sufficient space. The future belongs to architects, who are able to attain a balance between closeness and distance. When we have guests over, we have an open house. Otherwise, there are a number of private rooms. This opening and closing is the cultural technique of the 21st century. We must approach this issue in a responsible and stylish manner. OS-H: And we must approach this in a manner that the children never move out!

MH: The typical futuristic paradox is this: one anticipates a situation, one doesn't want to think about. You prepare the house in such a way that the children will eventually move out. Afterwards, you live such that they can always come back – or may even want to come back.

### **Then in such a way that the technology would act, instead of reacting – desirable state.**

MH: Stanislaw Lew would agree with the thought that the banes of technology can only be fought with other forms of technology. This is how evolution functions. Evolution is a never-ending attempt at survival and reparation because the last experiment didn't work out. That is why the design of the Future Evolution House is sure to change.



»Lamps from Occhio fit in each house and in every apartment. Here is the io 3d tavolo in black shine in the »Future Evolution House«.

### **Built over an area of 4,500 m<sup>2</sup>, the Future Evolution House itself appears to be rather compact; the rooms don't seem small but purposeful.**

MH: The idea of an aristocratic house with eighteen rooms and a changing room as well as a gentleman's, smoking, and hunting room has outlived itself. Today, we live in a utopia of contraction and an expansion into the virtual world. Our children have small rooms and live in a world influenced by the media and games. They hardly perceive their unwashed, dirty clothes, let alone nature.

## »THE BEAUTY OF OCCHIO IS THE SIMPLICITY.«

### **How do you look at challenges dealing with the design of the future?**

MH: In the materials. Windows were originally once holes in the walls. We want to abolish them. In each window there is a glass wall. We would like this glass to be able to generate electricity. Or perhaps with a touch of a button could switch to matt.

### **That sounds like a feasible plan with the right funds.**

MH: No, that would still be too expensive. But it's not all about technology. It's about activity. Take for example the clichéd, futuristic house. The refrigerator is intelligent, the house is able to operate by itself – one actually doesn't need to do anything. But what do you do, when you have nothing to do? We get fat. Civilisation takes away our abilities by shutting them down. That is merely a false impression of technology and the future. Technology should stimulate us and set us motion. It shouldn't end something! That's why we don't have a lawn robot. We have a garden, where you can chop wood. We also don't have a television – no humongous black hole on the wall, which sucks your attention. We go back to how it was in the beginning: fireplace and kitchen at the heart of the house, as was the tiled stove in the past. That is why we don't consider ourselves opponents of technology. We just use it differently.

OS-H: While the house was still under construction, the architect called me one day and asked, »Does your refrigerator require internet access?« To which I replied, »No, that is exactly what we don't need!«

MH: Why do kitchen devices need to communicate with one another? We cook individually but also sensibly and biologically. As a matter of fact, we do not like the idea of the »intelligent fridge«, invented by male technicians from the 60ies for the needs of depressive housewives.

OS-H: Extractor hoods make me go crazy! A superfluous invention altogether!

MH: We have abided by various forms of hygiene regulations, which have evolved to become maxims and cultural habits. As a result, some odd features still remain in German design as well as architecture. For instance, we simply don't understand people who adore extractor hoods.

### **You complain about the complete failure of the electrical industry that caters the area of home living.**

MH: House controls have become over engineered, much too complicated and utterly insensible. The question is whether we're applying a more-principle or better-principle here. An allegory for this would be the competition between Nokia and Apple.

Nokia has always introduced more models to the market – forty, perhaps fifty in a year. Apple then asked themselves »What annoys people about using mobile phones? How can we produce a piece of equipment that easily develops itself?« I think that things are given too much thought in marketing categories within the housing and automation branch. They only ask themselves »what do we want to sell?« At the end of it all, servers run hot in basements, there are thousands of functions on the remote control and no one knows how to open the garage door.

### **The new light series io3d seems both classic and highly innovative.**

MH: What I find interesting is the intuitive user guidance, the touchless technology and the way it can be switched on and off by hand approach. In addition, the brand Occhio delivers principles, which belong to the future. Classical design with high durability. Occhio is a brand, which expresses the neo classic – something we have dedicated ourselves to. And the modular assembly system is something we like too. Mind you, our entire house is built on combined forms.

OS-H: The io3d lights possess a 60s flair. They remind me of the industry designer Dieter Rams. The beauty of Occhio is in its simplicity. You have three or four series of products allowing countless combinations. You don't need more.

MH: Everyone has had plenty of experiences with lights and lamps. Most are broken, rusty or flaking. I can still remember my flat and the things hanging up that probably cost 18 Euros. At my age you just want things to last.

OS-H: Lamps from Occhio fit in each house and in ever apartment. If you move around a lot or change from student life to married life, you can always take the lamps with you.



The new book from Oona Strathern-Horx deals with the issue of how we will live in the future and looks at new energy trends and innovative technologies. It was published in October 2012 by the Deutschen Verlags-Anstalt under the title »Wir bauen ein Zukunftshaus« (»We Are Building a Future House«).

#### **Interview**

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