

Interior Design Ideas - House of Moloko Style Mavens



Up there! Your very own roof terrace...

Hong Kong based British landscape designer and interior architect **Anji Connell** reveals how to design a roof garden

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Terrace by the British seaside - Image ACID+ Anji Connell Interior Design Ltd

Who doesn't love a roof terrace, your own little bit of outside? Whether it's by the sea with the rhythmic sound of water lapping or an urban setting with the electric hum of air conditioners and the daily cacophony of city life. A borrowed nook in a sleek, 'state of the art' multi-levelled penthouse or a more humble first floor flat, it can give us such pleasure. It allows us to escape to dream, to relax and to gather with friends and family.

There is something very special about a roof terrace as opposed to a traditional ground level garden. The romance of climbing up to a terrace however small the space at the end. They may have no view or that of a spectacular cityscape, mountain views, green fields, snow covered mountains, or simply the surrounding roofs and chimney tops. A feeling of escapism and of being somewhere rather special is evoked.

When we think of a roof terrace we conjure up images of long leisurely breakfasts at the weekends, blossoming flowers in pots, fragrant trailing plants and creepers, herb gardens, barbecues, drink parties, snuggling around fires on cold winter evenings, sunbathing on a lovely sunny day, stealing the last vestiges of sun after work on long summer evenings with a glass of wine, sunrises and sunsets...

The smallest sliver of space is an asset and can be enhanced easily and cheaply. It adds to the emotional value of your home. It's also a good way to increase the eventual selling price as it is in effect an extra room. A recent survey found a roof terrace can increase the value of your property by 10%. Architects and builders report record numbers of owners are fitting terraces despite the planning bureaucracy. It may also help if you are planning to rent out your property.

A roof terrace in Hong Kong

Below is a roof terrace in Hong Kong, which a client has recently asked me to re-design. The space is great and looks over the sea; it's simply not inviting and the tiny table top is not usable.

My plans significantly improves the space with plant, a larger table top for dining, new cushions, sun umbrella, an awning

and lighting.



Roof terrace in Hong Kong prior to re-design - Image ACID+ Anji Connell Interior Design+



Plan for roof terrace re-design - Image ACID+ Anji Connell Interior Design+

There is a sun lounging area with an old awning. The client is renting and does not want the expense of re-tiling. The plants and the new fabrics will draw the eye away from the rather old tiling.

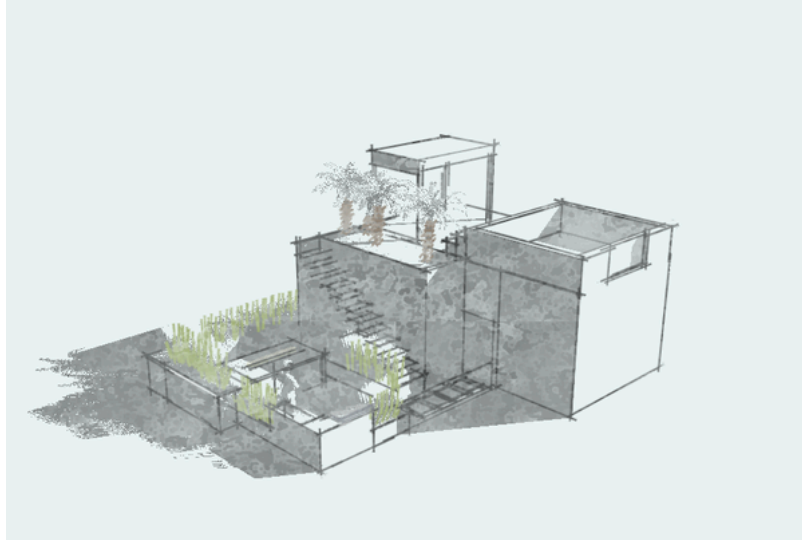


Sun lounging area before re-design - Image ACID+ Anji Connell Interior Design+



Plans to brighten up the sun lounging area - Image ACID+ Anji Connell Interior Design+

A Full Renovation could have sitting and kitchen area with steps leading up to a sun bathing pavilion and a glass fronted swimming pool.



Rendering of a full sun terrace renovation includes a swimming pool - Image ACID+ Anji Connell Interior Design+

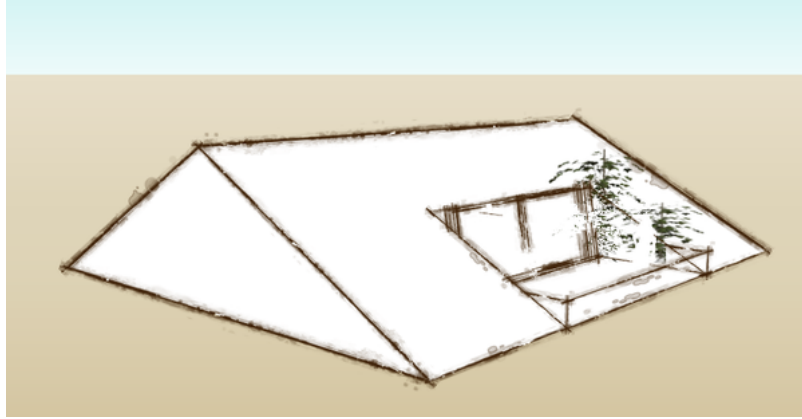
Any home can have a roof terrace with a little creativity

Typical Georgian and Victorian streets have the potential for roof terraces and they are a great addition to modern apartment blocks which typically do not have private gardens. Any home can have a roof terrace if the owner and designer use a little creativity and imagination. If you do not have a flat roof you can use, and are not planning to build an extension, you can cut into a mansard roof to create a flat space. You will need to contact an architect or specialist roof terrace company and your local council to see if you need planning permission.

You can cut through a gable roof and create your own outdoors - an inside-out roof terrace - see images below.



Inside-out roof terrace - Image Architecture Studio



Making a roof terrace in a loft space - Render ACID+ Anji Connell Interior Design+

Planning and construction

The Royal Town Planning Institute says roof gardens usually require planning consent if they overlook other properties, or if the creation of the terrace includes the building of substantial walls or major work such as installing an additional staircase. Any supporting wall must be able to bear the added weight of any wooden deck and visitors combined.

Care must be taken to ensure a flat roof is properly sealed and fully waterproofed with a slope to allow drainage for water run off and that it is not penetrated during the construction of the terrace.

Railings must be constructed to a height of 900 mm and with a space of no more than 100 mm between each rail to prevent a child climbing over or slipping through. Planning requires that the design of the roof terrace is complementary to its location especially if you are within a conservation area. Objections may be raised if you are obstructing someone's existing view, causing a loss of light, or a loss of privacy. Any possible noise and smells may have to be considered.

Ken Livingstone, the former Mayor of London produced the "Living Roofs" document, [2008] enthusing, "roof terraces and roof gardens can deliver benefits for individuals and for society as a whole by creating new outdoor spaces, enhancing biodiversity, reducing flood risk by absorbing heavy rainfall, providing insulation and improving the appearance of our cityscape."

■ *"London's most underused asset is just above our heads," is his conclusion.*

If you are not lucky enough to have a roof terrace or a balcony, how about a window box or a green wall? If you cannot obtain use of a shared flat roof for access perhaps you can have a green living roof constructed. This will add great aesthetic value and a better sense of well being. It has been long known that green views make us feel better and happier.

Or why not try a 'push out balcony' for your loft space. A simply brilliant idea. Please take a look at the suppliers: **Bloomframe** (based in the Netherlands) or **Velux** (International).



Push-out balcony by Velux

Other parameters to consider

- **Wind and Heat**

Stifling heat and intense light can create desert-like conditions. Rooftops have high evapotranspiration (evaporation plus transpiration) rates. Full exposure to wind, heat, and sunlight, with the resulting rapid loss of water, limits plant selection to those that can take a beating and a baking. Tender plants and small containers require a lot of attention (mostly watering) to survive. Wind is a major factor on exposed balconies and rooftops and gusts are much more powerful than at ground level. Wind can be deadly to many plants.

- **Plants**

Plants must be researched to determine which are likely to thrive in the particular conditions of your locality.

Consider the climate. If extremely arid, choose desert plants. If you are on the coast subject to sea spray, pick salt-tolerant plants. If you are in the far north and expect early frosts, select cold-hardy plants. Although the conditions can be extreme, some plants relish the sun and exposure. Short-grass prairie plants, desert and Mediterranean natives are particularly happy on a rooftop. Herbs like sage, thyme, hyssop, and rosemary require little attention. Sedum's, agaves, and other succulents will thrive anywhere. Of course it can be hit and miss and it may take some experimentation and persistence.

Irrigation and weight also need to be considered. Large containers work best as they are heavy enough to withstand wind gusts. The greater soil volume also means more moisture-holding capacity, which means less water stress for the plants. Large containers also allow room for combining different types of plants. Bulbs, annuals, perennials, and even trees and shrubs can be combined for multi season interest.

A few tips

- Roof terraces tend to be a long way up. Do not forget you will have to take everything you need up with you...
- Be aware of the inconvenience and dust and dirt of taking materials up to through your home during the construction period.
- Will you need a crane or scaffolding to get goods up to the roof terrace during construction.
- Think about access; do you need to buy sectional furniture or flat pack and assemble on site?
- Dollies are indispensable for moving around large planters once you get them up there!
- Ensure all is secured and there is nothing that can fall over or worse still crash to the ground.
- Storage space for cushions, sun umbrellas, canopies, shade sails and lightweight fold up furniture is essential.

- Fence panels, screens and box hedging are good for disguising ugly walls and satellite dishes. They also provide extra privacy.
- Even if you don't need planning permission it's always prudent to let your neighbours know what you are up to. It shows good will and might avoid unnecessary objections and conflict.
- For safety make sure you have waterproof sockets and all lighting is IP [Ingress Protection rated] rated for outside use.
- Remember you will need a water source and an irrigation system.
- You will need some shade to sit and shelter from the sun so do not forget to plan for this, even if it is just with some simple sail shades. These can be made in any size and shape and clip on to a railing, wall hook or a stainless steel pole. **Shade sails** add drama easily to any roof terrace, large or small.



Creating dramatic effect with shade sails - Image Baahir

Roof terrace benefits

Roof top gardens in dense urban environments help combat climate change, in reducing urban heat effect by providing thermal radiation resistance, the main cause of heat build up in cities is insolation, the absorption of solar radiation by roads and buildings in the city and the storage of heat in the building material and its subsequent re-radiation. Roof top gardens provide temperature control. They help reduce water run off, provide wild life corridors as well as architectural enhancement, recreational opportunities, and health benefits.

Design considerations

From holiday bolt hole decks to the sophisticated penultimate city slicker penthouse pad where hot tubs are no longer state of the art must haves, its now lap pools, full outdoor kitchens, wet bars, cinemas, fireplaces, water features, dance floors, indoor games rooms leading out on to terraces, all with layered lighting systems, mood lighting, sound systems, infinity pools, glass bottomed pools allowing light into the interior, and earth defying cantilevered pools. Single and multi level and wrap around terraces. Sky terraces on top of the roof tops all with zoned areas, for quiet times, yoga and meditation, food preparation, bar service, food service, barbecue, dancing, sunbathing areas with cabanas, shaded areas, mingling and partying areas.

There are even pools that with a flick of a switch disappear into usable floor space. There is an enormous variety of good quality garden furniture, fire pits and plant pots to suit all tastes and budgets. Fabrics that do not fade in the sun, that can be left out in rain and do not mould. No more do we have to rely on white and green plastic tables and chairs.

Incorporating a pool in a roof terrace - Case study

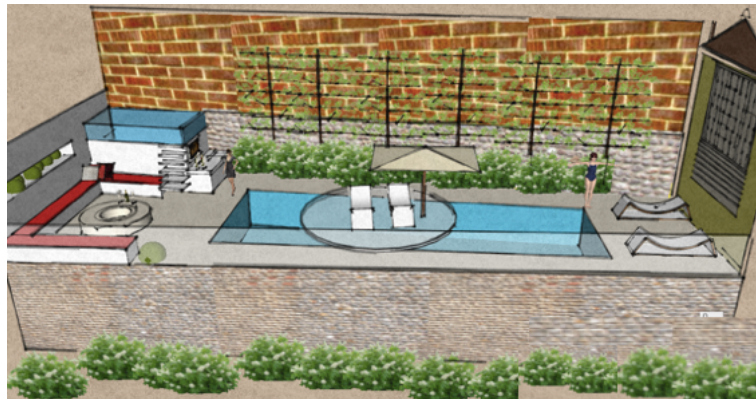
This client had a perfectly lovely seaside terrace but wanted to make it their own having inherited it and lived with it for some time.

My brief was to update it and that they must have a pool. It is not an easy area as it is long and narrow, however I have managed to incorporate a pool, a large sitting area, 2 sunbathing areas, a raised hot tub, a fire pit within the sitting area and a wood burning oven for cooking. With planting along the existing flint wall and a line of pleached trees.

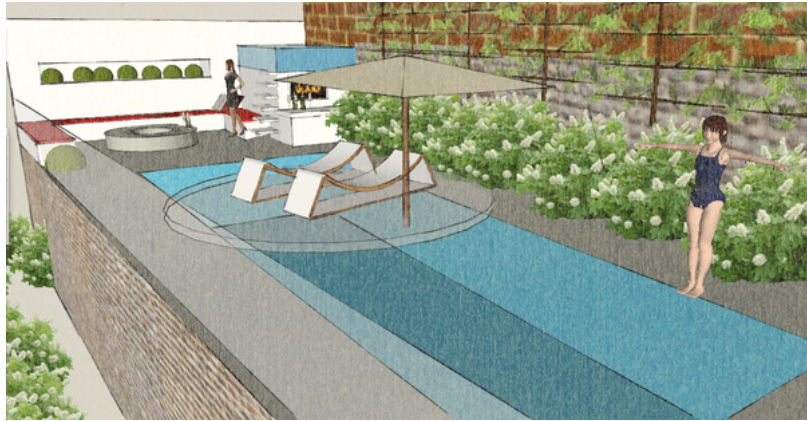
We hope to start building in Spring 2014.



Client's seaside terrace prior to re-design - Image ACID+ Anji Connell Interior Design+



Proposed design: Swimming pool, Raised glass hot tub, Sitting area - Image ACID+ Anji Connell Interior Design+



Sun bathing glass floor area over pool - Image ACID+ Anji Connell Interior Design+



Wood burning oven, Fire pit - Image ACID+ Anji Connell Interior Design+

Conclusion

Sky gardens, roof top gardens, green roofs, green walls, sky bridges: literally 'The Sky Is Not The Limit, That's Your Imagination' !

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