

HOME

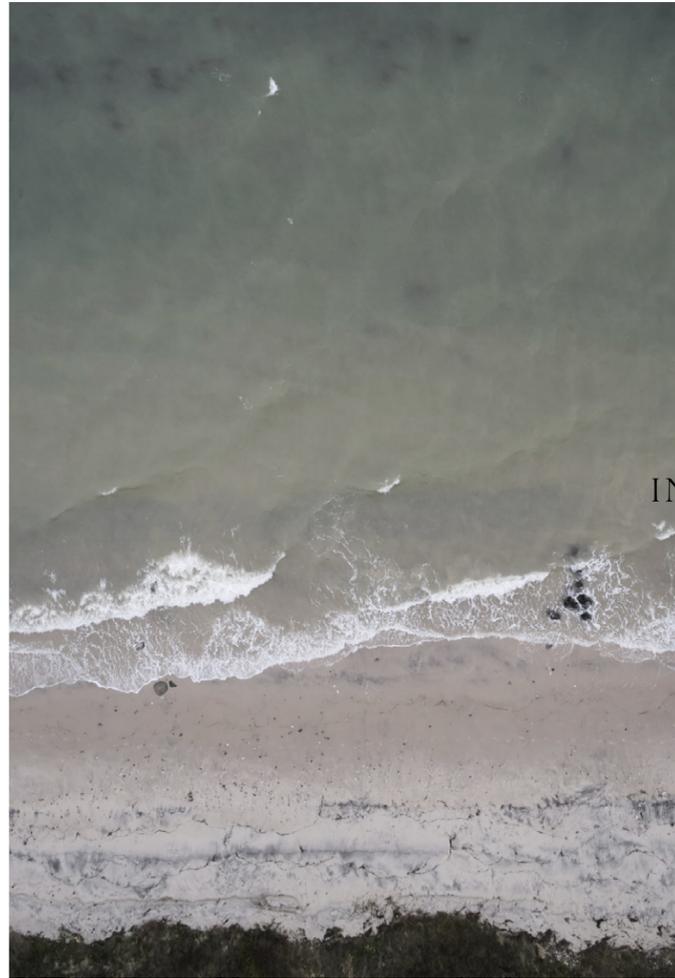
THE STARK GEOMETRY OF A MINIMALIST HOUSE
IN THE UNTAMED COASTAL LANDSCAPE
PROVED HYPNOTISING FOR
RICKY NORDSON AND REBEKKA BAY.

WORDS MARK ISITT

PHOTOGRAPHY ANDERS SCHÖNNEMANN

STYLING PERNILLE VEST

MINIMAL



INTERVENTION

RETOUCH THOMAS CATO



SEEN FROM ABOVE, the holiday home of Rebekka Bay and Ricky Nordson in the Mols Bjerge National Park on the east coast of Denmark's mainland Jutland looks like a suprematist artwork, a geometrical composition of a ruler-rigid virgin-white central wall with three black cubes. All this contrasts sharply with the untamed natural scenery around it, the garage facing north towards the turning space and the overgrown drive, and the main house and annex opening out to the south, to the kilometres-long stretches of sandy beach and limestone cliffs of Begtrup Bay.

The seller was the Christensen family. "Direktør Leif Christensen" as it says on the drawings, dated April 25, 1973, and signed by the little-known "furniture architect" Ole Refsgård. When Bay and Nordson first visited the house after buying it on an impulse over the phone, it was as if Christensen had just left. "I opened the bathroom cupboard and there was an orange melamine toothbrush mug," Bay recalls. "It was like walking straight back into my own childhood." Since then the couple has renovated all 110 square metres, everything from the 28 rotting roof beams to the 14-metre-long wall-fixed sofa to each of the 19 windows. Not that you would notice; it is all done with the care you can expect of a furniture agent and fashion creator. The typology is one that Refsgård most likely borrowed from the much-admired Knud Friis and Elmar Moltke Nielsen. "We suspect he worked there, at the Friis & Moltke architectural firm in Aarhus," says Bay. "Their influence is apparent everywhere, in the design of the roof, in the outdoor lamps, in the exceptionally broad window frames," says Nordson.

"I reckon," says Bay, "that this house marks the beginning of a new chapter. For years now we've envisioned sharing our time between a holiday home and a flat in Copenhagen. But not just yet, maybe in five years or so. It's as if time has overtaken us."

So now that their 16-year-old son Viktor has started boarding school and Bay spends every other week in Helsinki – she is creative director at the Finnish lifestyle brand Marimekko – they are getting ready to move again, this time to a smaller flat in the city centre.

"We met in Kolding," she says, "where I was studying fashion at the design school –"

"– and I was working as an art director –"

"– and as soon as I'd got my degree we jumped on the boat to London. We stayed for 14 years. I worked for COS, first as head of design and later as creative director –"

"– while I was working as an art director –"

"– before I was headhunted to Gap as a creative director and we moved to New York –"

"– and where I began importing Danish home accessories and furniture –"

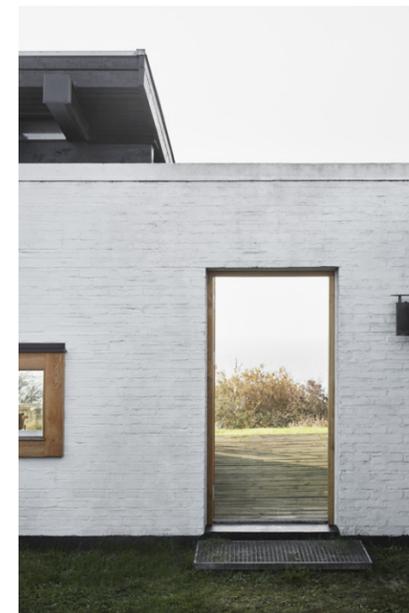
"– before I moved on to a position as creative director at Uniqlo."

They chat that way – ping pong, ping pong – just as tuned-in as you can be after 26 years together.

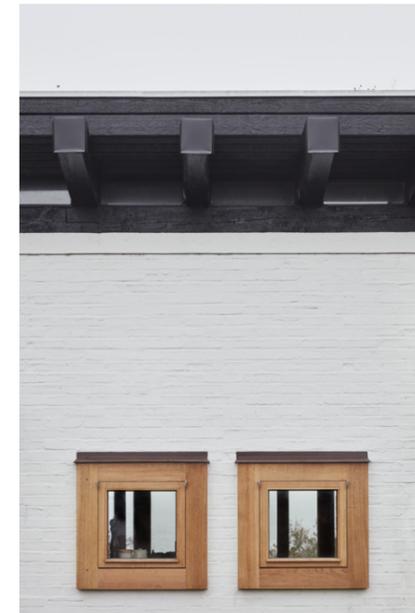
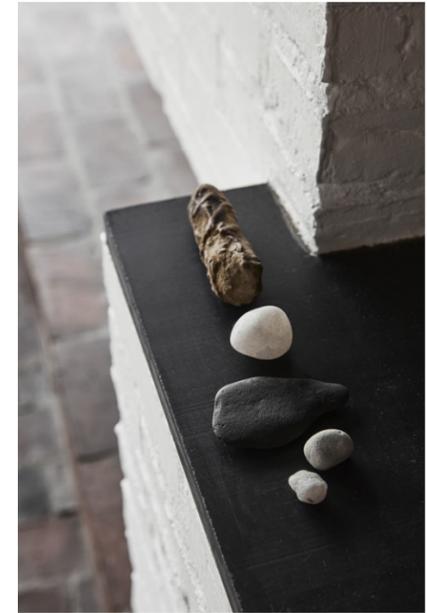
Their intention is to be in the house as much as possible. Bay grew up nearby and knows this hypnotising landscape well. But to discover a minimalist house out here. "Impossible!"

"There's an almost Japanese peacefulness to the place," says Nordson and points to the open layout and the flexible linking of the different spaces. The same applies to the inside and out, with the windows stretching from ceiling to floor, wall to wall, virtually eliminating the facade. A simplicity that is reinforced by the robust materials and the beams that follow the topography of the site itself, sloping down towards the bay, projecting to screen off the sun.

Quite apart from the dynamic suprematist composition itself. White Line with Three Black Cubes on Green Background.



Rebekka Bay and Ricky Nordson intend to spend as much time as possible in their holiday home on a slope above Begtrup Bay in the Mols Bjerge National Park on the east coast of Jutland. The opening in the whitewashed brick wall leads to the outdoor area that separates the main house from its annex. The outdoor lighting and the oversized frame of the small window are frequently seen in villas designed by the Århus firm Friis & Moltke, where it is believed the architect Ole Refsgård worked.



Original fireproof bricks from Bornholm in the open fireplaces with the addition of discoveries collected from the shore. The stool from Muji was bought in New York and the Cestita lamp is from Santa & Cole. The kitchen windows with their unexpectedly large frames are in oiled oak. **OPPOSITE:** It all looks just as it did when the house was new back in 1973. And yet not: all 19 windows are new, as is the oiled oak grill above the built-in radiators. The 14-metre-long wall-fixed sofa has been covered with Nanna Ditzel's Hallingdal 65 for Kvadrat. Alvar Aalto's stools for Artek stand beside Ole Schjøll's Stool for A. Petersen and the armchair from the fifties, produced by Ercol, was bought by Nordson in Edinburgh for £70. The lamp is by Arne Jacobsen for Louis Poulsen and the Etermit ceiling lamps are original. Floors are of Bornholm brick and the walls are glazed pine with massive pine beams in the ceiling.



The kitchen faces north towards the drive and turning area, and guests can be spotted arriving through two small windows. The dining room furniture is by Alvar Aalto for Artek, a legacy from Bay's father, the photographer Lars Bay. The new kitchen is a collaboration with the Danish firm Reform, of which Bay is a director. The kitchen benches are red linoleum, an allusion to the original 70s kitchen in yellow, green, blue and orange. **OPPOSITE:** The built-in sofa cosily extends to a snug corner by the fireplace with wood stacked in Pancho Nikander's Kanto Rack for Artek, along with Arne Jacobsen's AJ lamp for Louis Poulsen and stools from Ikea. Items on the shelves include ceramics from Studio Arhoj, Mogens Lassen's Kubus 4 candlestick and Jens Quistgaard's classic wine cooler for Dansk. The glazed apertures between the ceiling beams are a feature frequently seen in villas by Friis & Moltke.





A sliding door separates the bedroom from the sitting room, evidenced by the beam and the small gap in the brick threshold. The AJ Table Lamp by Arne Jacobsen is from Louis Poulsen, the basket from Helsinki and the rice paper prints by Isamu Noguchi were bought at The Noguchi Museum in Queens, New York, when the couple lived there. OPPOSITE: In the original plans the annex was referred to as the "children's house" and is the hideaway for Viktor, Bay's and Nordson's sixteen-year-old son. The annex is a smaller variant of the main building, one-third the size but with the same simple pillar and beam structure.



The bed in the annex is located behind two sliding doors and a raised platform with built-in storage has replaced the original bunk bed. The stool is from Muji. OPPOSITE: Bay and Nordson have retained the original beams throughout but carefully replaced damaged sections with new wood. The glazed facade to the south is shaded by projecting roofing and rainwater gutters are concealed in the roof.