

THE STORY OF NORDIC COLOUR

There is a popular belief that Nordic interiors have always been light, bright and white. But the pale, walls and minimalist interiors that have dominated Scandinavian homes in recent years have their roots in a style that emerged in the last century.

In reality, many design movements have influenced the region's interiors over the centuries and the new Nordic use of colour is not really new at all, at least not if we take a closer look at how colour has been used in this region in the past.

The white, minimalist interiors so typical of Scandinavian homes in the past few decades date back to the Stockholm Exhibition of 1930, which established functionalism as the dominant style in the Nordic region. The exhibition showcased

a modernist lifestyle, with model housing boasting pared-down furnishings, large windows and clean white walls – a seductive vision of contemporary living.

After the Second World War, the term 'Scandinavian Modern' was coined by the Anglo-American design world in the 1950s. The style emerged via several exhibitions featuring design from Nordic countries and the establishment of Scandinavian design as a commodity put names such as Alvar Aalto, Hans J Wegner, Bruno Mathsson and Finn Juhl on the map and paved the way for manufacturers to produce 'products for good living'. Scandinavian Modern interiors were cultured and restrained, with pale walls, natural wood and beautiful, functional furniture. It was around this time that Scandinavian interiors became synonymous with good taste, and the stereotype has persisted ever since.

But modernism is only one side of the story. The Baroque period featured gold accents and rich hues while in 18th-century Sweden the Gustavian style espoused elegantly muted pastels. The Arts and Crafts movement that developed in England during the late 19th century spread to the Nordic region, bringing with it a colour palette of natural pigments: earthy brown, forest green, poppy red and deep plum.

During the 1920s, the Swedish Grace movement was famous for its playful Neoclassical style and subdued Art Deco hues. And we only need to rewind a few decades to find colourful walls in Nordic homes. In the 1970s, Scandinavians painted and papered with strong colours and bold patterns. The 1980s saw a revival of the Gustavian style and a sophisticated palette of pale pink, sky blue and apricot. The 1990s turned to earthy natural tones such as terracotta, cobalt blue and pistachio green, before colours once again lightened, and turned slowly to white, grey and beige.

So the concept of Nordic colour is not exactly a new one. But, as this book will reveal, after a long period of neutral colour and minimal decor, we are currently witnessing a new and exciting infusion of bold, beautiful and refreshing colour.





ABOVE AND OPPOSITE Sara chooses art by instinct and she has the same philosophy when it comes to selecting furniture. In the living room, the yellow velvet chaise longue from Danish company Eilersen is accompanied by the Diamond table from FOS and green and blue Lens tables with resin tops by British designers McCollin Bryan. The Moroccan rug is vintage, from Copenhagen store The Apartment. Daylight is reflected in the mirror piece by Henry Krokatsis and Adonis artwork by Elmgreen & Dragset.

PAGE 84 The living room has all the ingredients that are important for a warm and welcoming home: plants, textiles, light and colour. The elegant lines of the Gubi sofa are softened by cushions from Tapet-Café and the artwork is by Tom Humphreys.

PAGE 85 The French doors are screened by simple white curtains. The artwork is by David Shrigley and the floral rug is Fleurette by Helene Blanche, a famous Danish textile designer and Jannik's wife.

PAGE 81 The flooring throughout the house was treated with white hard wax to achieve a light, semi-matte finish. It's a perfect match for the grey Wishbone or Y-chairs from Hans J Wegner that surround a marble-topped dining table by another iconic Danish designer, Poul Kjærholm. The geometric Lina pendant light in brass hanging above the table is by the Chinese-born American designer Rosie Li and was inspired by 1960s Italian lighting. The red box made from salvaged materials just seen on the floor behind the table is by Brooklyn-based artist Graham Collins.

Once a popular summer retreat for Copenhagen's wealthy bourgeoisie, Gentofte is now a leafy, pleasant suburb located just ten minutes away from the city centre. The house where Sara lives was originally a large family home complete with gardens and stables, but it has been converted into separate units that now house six families. Her portion of the house is split over two floors and has its own lovely garden.

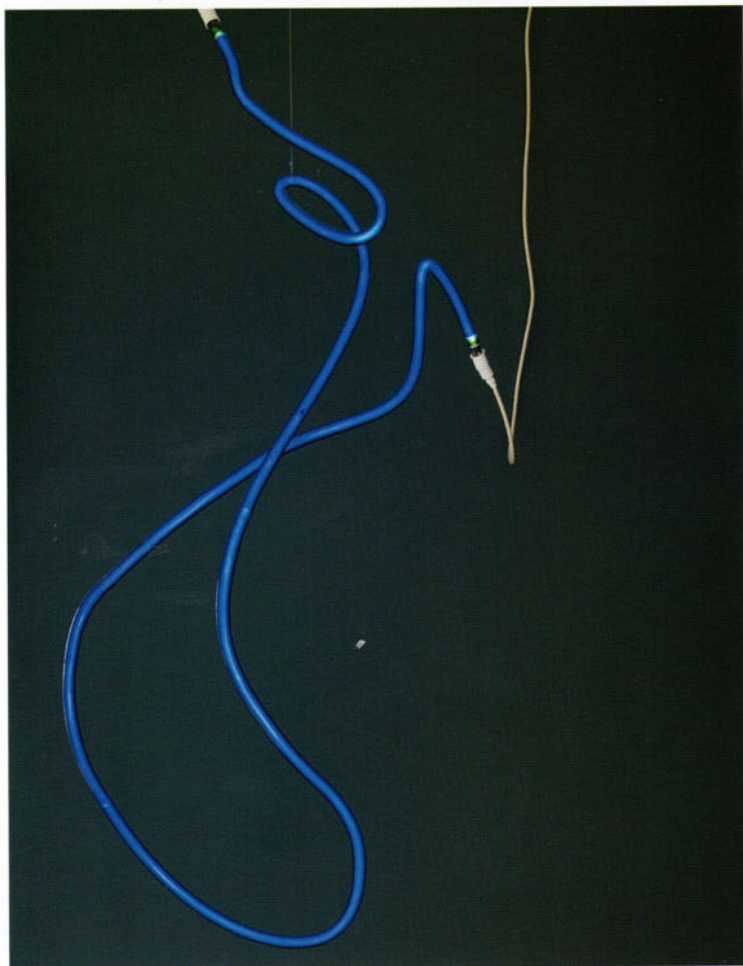
Sara moved in seven years ago, along with her boyfriend. Their newly renovated house was a clean white shell with white walls, white curtains and bleached wooden floors. Simple and stylish, the pared-down, typically Scandinavian interior suited the couple perfectly at the time. But times change, and when Sara's relationship came to an end, she decided that she wanted to remain in the house but to make a fresh start and create a new home to suit her new life.

Sara began the process by putting all of her furniture, art and other possessions into storage, leaving her with a blank canvas. Realizing that she had a new appetite for bold colour, she turned to Jannik Martensen-Larsen — a friend who also happens to be the owner of celebrated Danish design company Tapet-Café, which was founded in 1974 and is located in an old house close by in Gentofte. Sara asked Jannik to realize her vision

BOLD
ACCENTS







ABOVE LEFT The sculptural blue neon squiggle is by the Swedish-Danish artist Gun Gordillo. She has been working with light for more than 25 years, making the pieces herself in her studio. Well known in the Scandinavian art world, she is now popular on the international stage as well.

ABOVE RIGHT Paint-splattered coffee mugs from the LA-based ceramic artist Peter Shire reflect the changes in Sara's home over the past few years — from plain white to a vibrant spectrum of colour.

OPPOSITE A wooden staircase leads upstairs. The walls are Light Blue from Farrow & Ball and in the stairwell hangs an installation with soccer balls by Colombian artist Dario Escobar. The two paintings hung adjacent to each other in the corner are by New York-based artist Landon Metz. The timeless kitchen boasts glossy, white cabinets and had just been installed by the previous owner when Sara moved in, almost seven years ago.



of a home filled with timeless yet bold colours and richly patterned textiles in matching hues. With Jannik's encouragement and collaboration, Sara was able to commit to her vision of a colourful home.

The results are breathtaking. A palette of petrol blue, peppermint, powder pink, grass green and citrus yellow is combined with attention-grabbing artworks, patterned rugs and eclectic furnishings. Sara does not miss her all-white interior, saying that, while it suited her at the time, in retrospect it was bland and didn't make enough of a statement. Her attitude towards colour has undergone a complete change during the past few years, and Sara describes herself as something of a colour addict now, automatically opting for rich, vibrant shades when it comes to clothing, furniture and art. She explains that the transformation of her home has allowed her to be true to herself and her own personal tastes.

Sara grew up in a home that was filled with art. At the tender age of 18, she asked her father to withdraw all the funds from her childhood savings account so that she could buy her first piece. Today, as well as an art collector, Sara is