

scandimodern

Fay Sweet



MITCHELL BEAZLEY



↑ In tune with the grand scale of these rooms, the island kitchen has an almost monumental look to it. The open-plan interior is given added interest with the use of different floor levels – the kitchen sits on a plinth reached by a broad flight of stairs from the living area.

in harmony with nature

Many people think of Scandinavian countries as being blessed with huge, wide-open tracts of countryside, which, of course, they are, but this does not mean that the building of new homes is taken lightly or that the regulations governing it are in any way easy. In the Nordic countries, contemporary rural homes must be built with considerable sensitivity to their natural surroundings and, as in most Western countries, strict planning laws govern all aspects of new building. Often architects are required to submit plans that use the local design language – for example, in many areas the traditional pitched roof is preferred over flat or even barrel-vaulted shapes. Those designers who want to depart from the traditional norm must prepare themselves for lengthy negotiations with extremely cautious planning authorities. As well as style, there are usually controls that govern the height of new buildings, and planners will also certainly want to keep a tight rein on the types of materials that are used in construction. Although the process can be fraught with frustration, this conservative approach is the main reason that so much of the rural landscape remains intact and unscarred by new building.

As well as having a rather careful and cautious approach to planning buildings, Scandinavia has also become synonymous with the best in ecological design, building materials, and construction techniques. Perhaps due to their unbroken contact with nature, architects and designers in these countries were among the first to recognize that constructing new buildings could be achieved in a way that was more sensitive to the environment. For example, in designing many new homes the path of the sun and direction of the cold winds are taken into consideration, together with the surrounding landscape and natural features such as trees and rocks. The orientation of a house is most important when working with nature – the most sensitively designed homes are positioned with their back to the oncoming harsh weather. Walls that face the bad weather are solid, well-insulated,

↓ This imposing country house is set on a hillside and is designed to take advantage of the amazing views that surround it. The living room is the part of the house that is closest to the view, and is made almost entirely of glass. The remaining parts, set further back, are made in more solid materials.

