



Page 94

July 2018

House & Garden

[View](#)

take the view

Mountain vistas and access to nature were key requirements in the design of this modern timber cabin, set in the picturesque isolation of a Norwegian national park

TEXT ELIZABETH CHOPPIN | PHOTOGRAPHS JAMES SILVERMAN





Page 96
July 2018
House & Garden

[View](#)



**Page 97**

July 2018

House & Garden

[View](#)

KITCHEN (*opposite top and this page*)
Bespoke units were designed for this open-plan space by the architects, Christopher Adams and Henriette Salvesen. Built-in shelves in the island display china and glassware, including white porcelain bowls by Søgne

DINING AREA (*opposite bottom*)
Christopher and Henriette also designed an oak dining table for the kitchen. With chairs from Carl Hansen and pendant lights from Metalarte, it provides a hub for the family to eat together and entertain





Page 98

July 2018

House & Garden

View

Like many Norwegian urbanites, the owners of this extraordinary house had wanted to find a peaceful, out-of-town spot on which to build a cabin retreat. The family, with three teenage children, is based in Oslo, and decided on the Hallingdal valley as the setting for weekend escapes. The area is just a few hours' drive away from the capital and is known for its cross-country skiing in the winter, and hiking and fishing in the summer. The plot of land they bought is situated on the edge of a large national park, home to elks, reindeer and ptarmigans, and the perfect place for a hideaway.

Having a cabin in such a place is a cornerstone of Norwegian life, but the design by Christopher Adams and Henriette Salvesen, who head up architecture practice Div.A Arkitektur, challenges the familiar image of the Scandinavian second home. As did the process by which the pair were commissioned to conceive it. The owners held an invited competition to select their architects – an unusual step, but a sign of their commitment to getting it right. What Christopher and Henriette proposed was a series of subtle timber structures that are modern yet sensitive to their surroundings.

It is an approach that is at the heart of Div.A's philosophy. 'We aim to create timeless and functional architecture for everyday needs. Projects shouldn't make a statement and dominate the context,' says Henriette, who is Norwegian. She and Christopher, who is British and moved to Norway after studying architecture, are a husband-and-wife team who have collaborated with David Chipperfield and Richard Rogers Architects on notable civic projects in Oslo. This cabin was completed in 2016.

'The owners didn't want to be off-grid necessarily, but they wanted to have the feeling of being quite remote in the middle of nature,' says Henriette. There were just a handful of requests: views of the mountains, easy access to nature and a minimalist, refined aesthetic. They also wanted both the sitting room and the main bedroom to look straight at the mountain ridge. 'The only way to achieve it was with two parallel buildings, both pointing towards the ridge,' explains Christopher. The concept was enough to win them the commission.

As with so many modern chalets in Scandinavia, the cabin's most striking quality is its simplicity. Strict planning regulations limited the size of the property's footprint, as well as the materials used and the shape. This is why Christopher and Henriette designed double-pitched roofs for the structures to echo the traditional vernacular of the area. It is a nod to the past without falling into the trap of pastiche.

The exterior of the house is clad with untreated cedar, which will weather gently over time. 'The connection of Norwegians to wood cannot be overemphasised,' says Christopher. 'From spending holidays in a wooden cabin, to getting married in a wooden stave church, or raising a

family in a wooden house – it's a lifelong relationship.' Inside, the cabin's exquisitely finished floors, walls and ceilings have been clad with vertical and horizontal oak boards, which are punctuated by picture windows. There are also expanses of polished concrete, such as the sitting room's chimneypiece and window-ledge seating area.

Four of the five bedrooms are in the main house, with two on the ground floor and three on the basement level, which is accessed by a custom-made staircase with built-in storage at the base. The basement, which was dug out so that the cabin would comply with height restrictions, creates an additional 80 square metres of liveable space. It gives the family all the ancillary areas they need, including a laundry room, a television lounge, storage for sports equipment, and a sauna and steam complex.

Back up on the ground level, which covers an area of 127 square metres, an open-plan kitchen and dining area leads to the sitting room, where the family can flop down on the sofas and take in the dramatic views from full-height windows to the south and west. 'They wanted to be able to have all five members of the family seated at the same time, as well as guests,' Henriette explains. With this in mind, the spacious dining table can comfortably seat 10. A wood-burning stove, a window seat laden with furs and underfloor heating add to the warm and inviting feel in the sitting room. 'The contrast between the harsh, howling winter storm outdoors and a refined welcome inside is something that brings a lot of happiness to Norwegians,' Christopher explains.

The second structure houses the main bedroom, with its all-important mountain view, and is connected to the main house by a glazed walkway that creates a feeling of privacy and separation from the living areas. 'The owners wanted to be able to retire to their bedroom away from all the other bedrooms,' says Henriette. A third, timber-clad annexe houses a carport and an area for waxing and repairing skis – 'quite important for Norwegians,' explains Henriette. As a group, the clustered units create a kind of courtyard, giving a central focus to the house.

'Our challenge was to give this house a contemporary design feeling,' Henriette continues. 'With the views, all of the big windows are almost like pieces of art on the wall, so you don't need to add much to the interior.' Likewise, nothing seems extraneous in the design. Except for the normal challenges of building in a remote place, the construction was fairly straightforward, albeit with one or two rough patches of weather. The winters in Hallingdal are merciless, with heavy snowfall and winds forming insurmountable snowdrifts, so building needed to start as soon as possible after the thaw in order to finish the project before another winter rolled around. 'Modern Norwegians expect comfort,' Christopher explains. 'If they manage to get to their cabins, that is' □

— Div.A Arkitektur: diva.no

TOP ROW

Cool-toned textiles contrast with the oak cladding in the owners' son's bedroom. The main bedroom is connected to the house by a glazed walkway. The oak staircase to the basement has built-in storage at its base

MIDDLE ROW

The exterior of the cabin is clad in untreated cedar, which requires little maintenance. No art was needed on the interior walls, as the full-height windows offer views of the surrounding countryside

BOTTOM ROW

A bedroom for the children, with bunk beds and a miniature loft, is situated on the basement level. The cabin comprises three timber-clad buildings. These were constructed on a levelled concrete base



Page 99
July 2018
House & Garden

[View](#)

