

VELUX®

FINDING OPPORTUNITY IN THE UNEXPECTED

ADA House: Art,
Design, Architecture





ART, DESIGN, ARCHITECTURE

ADA House lives up to its name, with Art, Design and Architecture all playing equal roles in this stunning project. It's a unique family home, incorporating a studio, gallery and home office, all built around a beautiful forest view. The innovative layout was inspired in part by a change to planning laws that arose partway through the project's design.

A PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION

Marcus Vagnby and Karina Mencke met at the Danish Design School in 2003 and started collaborating as a couple shortly after.

In 2005, they took the plunge and founded their design business mencke&vagnby, which spans design, art and architecture.

They work collaboratively at their kitchen table and home office, especially during the early phases of a project. As Marcus explains “We work together mainly in the creative and sketch phase, then one of us manages the detailing, so it’s a very collaborative process.” They each take the lead on different projects or phases, playing to their individual strengths. “Karina would focus more on direction, shape, and colour, while I’m generally more focussed on shaping and technical details.”

For their own home, ADA House in rural Denmark, they chose a plot very close to their existing home, a place on the edge of a forest that they knew well. The nature, the community and the sense of peace and privacy were all key reasons they fell in love with the plot.

“The plot is very green, with trees, plants and shrubs all around giving privacy but still with nice neighbours nearby. It’s a very green, very private place.”

Karina Mencke, Artist and Homeowner





REFLECTIONS ON THE LANDSCAPE

The couple loved living next to the forest, and wanted to maintain that connection in the new house. With a gentle slope, the design takes advantage of beautiful, far-reaching views of the surrounding countryside.

The house grew out from the site, the ground being folded up, and has a circular geometry in order to follow the sun throughout the day. In that sense, the house is connected to the time of day and becomes a sundial. To highlight the materiality of daylight, the house incorporates many round details that the sunlight can bend around.

Karina's sculptural experience informs her approach to space and materials, with the artistic approach evident in the shapes, colour and overall aesthetic concept of the house's interior and exterior.

Careful colour choices, such as the red shelving in the dining room that matches the colour of beech tree just outside the window, and spaces that evolve with light throughout the day and across the year, are other areas where the artistic spirit is present in the makeup of the house.



“The main reason for this shape was the long view to the West over the forest, and the site is elevated, which although a challenge, was an opportunity to create different spaces and views.”

Karina Mencke, Artist and Homeowner



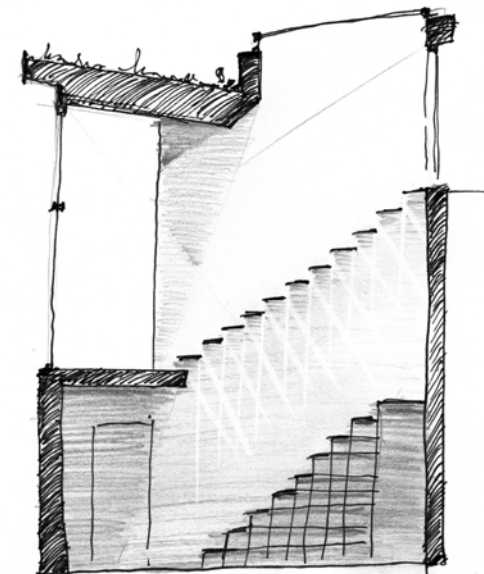
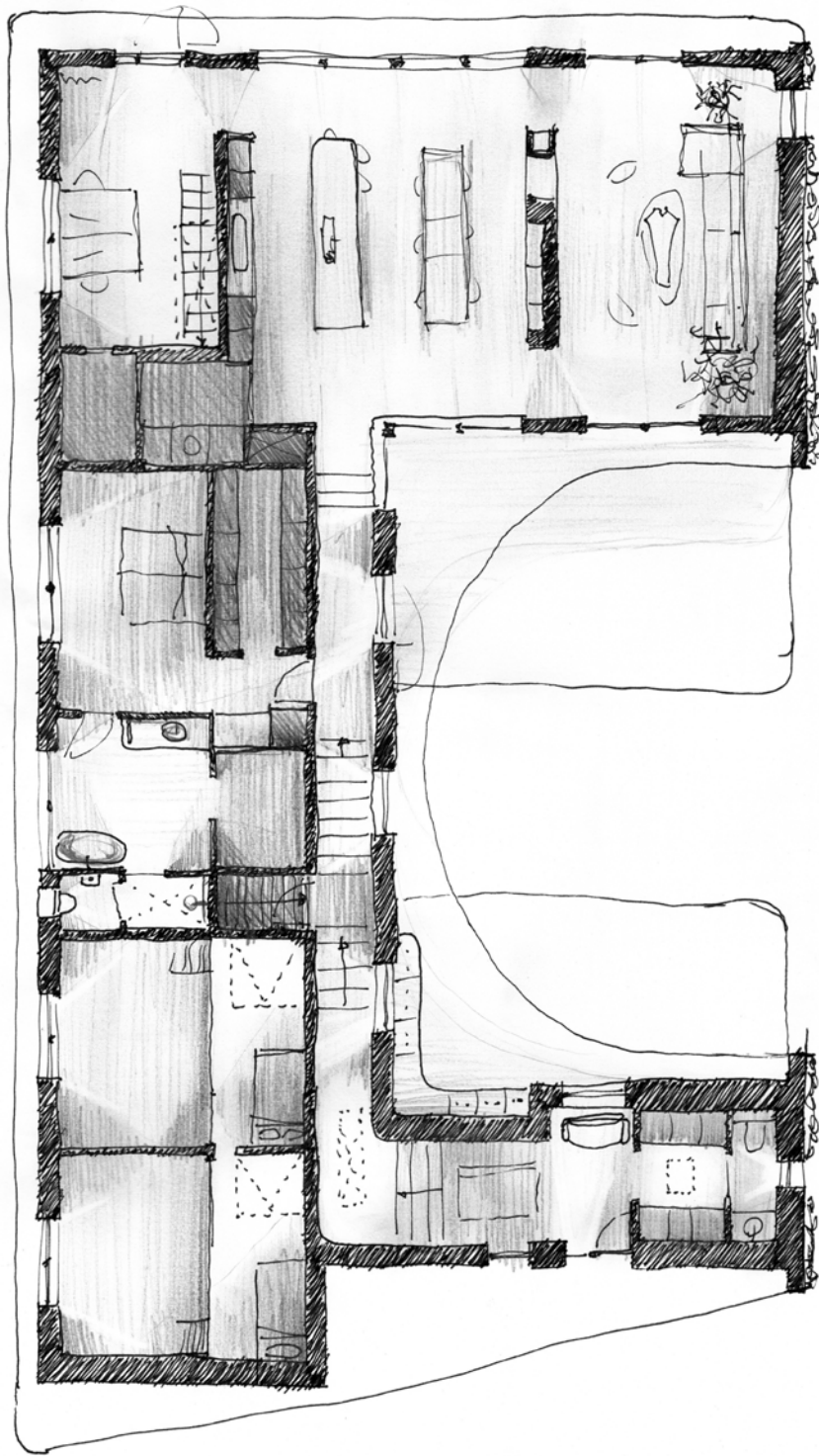
“The house is composed of three square boxes combined under one curved roof, inspired by Japanese house forms with contrasting curves and straight lines.”

Marcus Vagnby, Architect and Homeowner


SPACE TO WORK, REST AND PLAY

As well as additional space for their young family to grow, the couple wanted to create a place where they could indulge their creative and artistic impulses, with the space for a permanent studio and exhibition space.

There is a home office situated conveniently close to the main living space and kitchen, but separate enough to create a gentle divide between the professional and personal parts of the couple's lives.

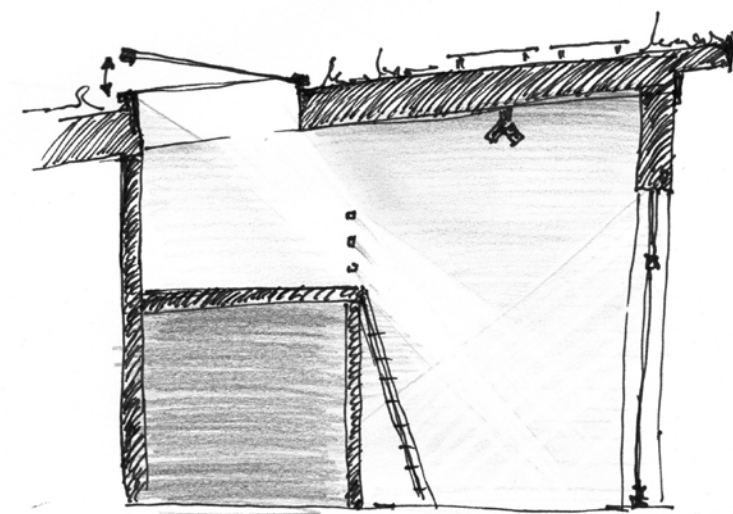


Above the staircase, a VELUX flat roof window floods the workspace with natural daylight, creating a bright and uplifting environment for creative projects.



“We wanted a workspace where mess wouldn’t matter, so we put it in the basement using natural light from windows and roof windows.”

Karina Mencke, Artist and Homeowner



VELUX flat roof windows transform the children's bedrooms into bright, inviting play areas by day and provide opportunities for stargazing at night, while blackout blinds create darkness during the shorter summer nights.

“We discussed carefully where to place rooms, for example, bedrooms on the north side for cooler temperature and cosy green views, while the office got a nice view of the forest.”

Karina Mencke, Artist and Homeowner

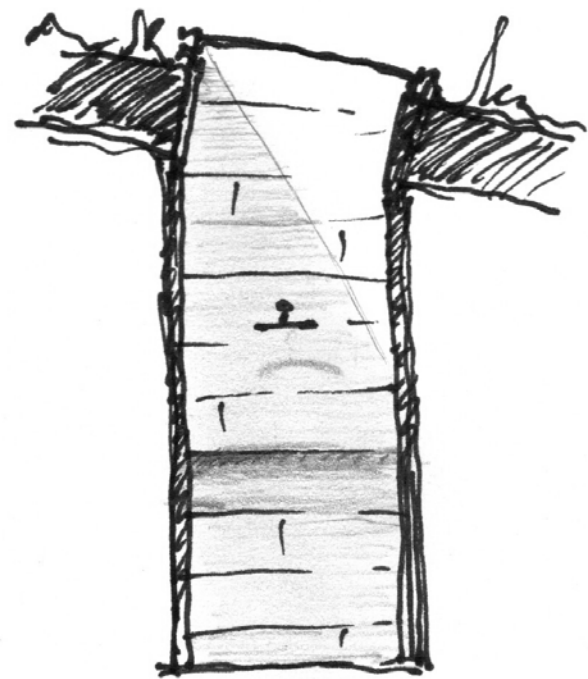


LETTING THE LIGHT IN

Light and warmth were considered very early in the process, ensuring that the rooms' primary functions could be supported by their design and positioning.

Light from VELUX flat roof windows shifts and moves throughout the day, creating pleasing optical effects. A roof window over the shower provides beautiful sunlight in the morning and views of the stars at night. Moonlight can be seen shining in as you pass the bathroom after dark.

Even the basement uses light wells so that the entire house can be used during the day without artificial lighting.







BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD

Just before embarking on a 7-week campervan trip to New Zealand, Marcus and Karina found out that local planning rules had changed. Originally designed for two storeys, the area was rezoned to allow only one storey buildings. They had to completely redesign the house from scratch, 90% of which Marcus did while travelling in the tiny van.

The potential constraint turned into an opportunity for a creative rethink of the entire layout, incorporating the site's elevation and features to create different views and atmospheres.

“Despite the challenges, we actually gained advantages by having varied views and different room experiences, even if it meant using more ground space.”

Marcus Vagnby, Architect and Homeowner

“We used the site's elevation to stack functions up the hill, making ceiling heights higher in main living areas to create framed views with privacy.”

Marcus Vagnby, Architect and Homeowner



GUIDED BY LIGHT, INSPIRED BY VELUX

The role of VELUX light architects is to inspire and guide architects on integrating roof windows and skylights in the most functional and beautiful way.

“We worked with Artur Slupinski, one of VELUX’s daylight architects, who gave us valuable advice.”

Marcus Vagnby, Architect and Homeowner

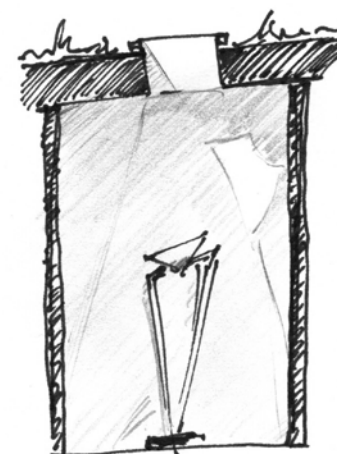
Artur helped refine the layout, even suggesting an extra window to enhance the daylight experience and bring the space to life.

On entering the house, a small window offers a teasing glimpse of the green roof with the forest beyond. The entry was designed to deliberately frame the southeast views of the landscape.

The hallway is illuminated by natural light from above. VELUX flat roof windows guide visitors through the house, highlighting views and emphasising transitions with subtle changes in light. The hallway glass rooflight also acts almost like a sundial, with light moving across the rounded corner throughout the day, creating artistic patterns with shadow.

“A skylight shouldn’t be added as an afterthought; it needs to be an integral part of the architecture.”

Artur Slupinski, VELUX Daylight Advisor, Architect PhD



“Light is very important to us and has been part of the design to ensure all areas get daylight. The house still surprises us, especially the curved roof and its round cut-out, which creates a unique view of the sky and the trees.”

Marcus Vagnby, Architect and Homeowner





LOOKING FORWARD

Living and working in the house every day has only deepened the family's appreciation of how light and space interact.

The family often comments on how much they enjoy the sunset views, watching birds and even bats flying through the circular opening.

Looking ahead, they are excited to see the facade and garden mature: "We're looking forward to finishing the green roof, seeing the garden grow — there's still lots to develop and enjoy."

"The curvature of the edges, you can keep looking at it, it's really powerful."

Marcus Vagnby, Architect and Homeowner



PROJECT DATA

Client: Marcus Vagnby and Karina Mencke
Architect: mencke&vagnby
Year: 2023-2024
Location: Holte, Denmark
Photography: Adam Mørk



VELUX Danmark A/S
Breetlevej 18
2970 Hørsholm
Tlf.: 45 16 45 16

salg@velux.dk
www.velux.dk

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