

In the entrance, flooring in aged oak boards; the same wood, veneered and brushed, is used for the wall panels. On the Rick Owens table, stone vase by Nicolas Schuybroek for When Objects Work; brass keyholder by Vincent van Duysen, also for When Objects Work. Opposite page, a portrait of architect and designer Nicolas Schuybroek.

SOME KIND

OF WONDERFUL

Concept takes centre stage. A detached villa in Bruges references the greats of Rationalism, alternating solids and voids, light and shadow. In dialogue with nature

photos by Ambroise Tezenas and Koen Van Damme — words by Paola Maraone

The spacious living area offers views of the generous garden and the outdoors through the large windows. Set into the wall, which conceals a storage unit, is the stunning stone fireplace. The Library bench, in teak and natural cane, is by Pierre Jeanneret, as are the pair of Kangourou chairs on the right. The low table in the centre, in brushed elm, is the designer's custom design.





It was an almost fateful encounter, that between Belgian architect Nicolas Schuybroek, internationally renowned for his timeless minimalism, and Thomas Ostyn, CEO of Obumex, the family business specialising in kitchens and cladding. The pair had already crossed paths a few years previously: “Thomas asked me what I thought about renovating a house on the coast. I told him the project wasn’t workable. That might have been the end of it, but then he called me up a few months later”, explains the architect. “He had bought some land in Bruges and proposed a partnership: I would handle the design, they would handle the coverings and finishes. We spent a long time imagining together what it would be like: Thomas and his wife Julie have three small children, so the house had to contain and absorb their energy”. The result of these reflections is a detached home that references the Rationalism of the greats – Gropius, Mies van der Rohe – while still maintaining its own character: compact volumes versus abstract surfaces, cleverly alternated solids and voids, light and shadow, in a constant deconstruction of levels. The Ostyn house is not camouflage architecture, but its grey brick cladding conveys solidity while also relating with the nature and greenery of its surroundings. “This was also a challenge”, says Schuybroek. “There was something gloomy and dark about the surrounding woods. How could we create a sense of light and openness there?

We decided to ‘push’ the house as far as possible to the rear of the lot, to create a larger garden at the front”. Every inch is treated with the same care, and the quality of the materials and the work is consistent throughout, from the main entrance to the garage. “It is a house that ‘demands’ to be used”, says the owner, “in which 90 percent of the space is in use 90 percent of the time. There are no pointless or forgotten corners, it isn’t trying to be a showroom”. That means no dining rooms used only when there are guests, but “a large table in the kitchen where we all eat together, do homework, sit and read. It is the heart of the house, from which everything originates, it’s everyone’s favourite place”. As to the furniture, the designs are carefully chosen (partly thanks to a collaboration with Joseph Dirand and John Pawson, who Ostyn has worked with for many years), but all with the same aim: “Instead of ‘look but don’t touch’ furniture, we wanted pieces which would only be improved by the patina of time”. With the resources available through the family firm meaning raw materials and methods were virtually unlimited, the problem was channelling the energies in a single direction. “That’s why working with an architect was vital. He didn’t set me limits, but he did help me put my dreams in order”. The last of which is a private area with home spa around the master bedroom, “more comfortable than a hotel suite”. The ideal place for the staycation era. —



“There was something gloomy about the surrounding greenery. Pursuing a sense of light and openness, we ‘pushed’ the house to the rear of the lot, creating a larger garden at the front”

Nicolas Schuybroek

Above, stone kitchen by Joseph Dirand for Obumex. Brasilia suspension lamps by Michel Boyer, Ozone. Teak and natural cane chairs by Pierre Jeanneret. Opposite page, the house’s architecture is in dialogue with its surroundings, in an interplay of solids and voids which gradually dissipate towards the woods. On the veranda, Charlotte Perriand chaise longues provide perfect relaxation.



Another view of the living space, with custom stone bookshelves by Obumex. On the left-hand wall, 'Holy egg', a work by Gavin Turk. Behind the custom sofa, next to the window, Totem floor lamp by Serge Mouille. In the foreground, Ipanema chair by Jorge Zalszuspín for Etel. In the background, a glimpse of the study with its Pigeonhole desk by Pierre Jeanneret.



“It is a house that ‘demands’ to be lived in, where 90 percent of the space is in use 90 percent of the time. Its heart is the large kitchen table, everyone’s favourite spot”

Thomas Ostyn

Above, in the lounge area, fabric-covered custom sofa. The coffee table is a copper-clad Joseph Dirand prototype. On the wall, Brasilia light by Michel Boyer, Ozone. Opposite page, oak chairs by Bassam Fellows, oak table custom-designed by the designer, as is the stone bowl, produced for When Objects Work. Vintage suspension lamps in brass by Louis Weisdorf.





The grey tiles cladding the building are laid in differing directions, alternating horizontal and vertical, reflecting the light differently and highlighting the architectural design by defining floors, roofs, and structural elements. Opposite page, a view of the dressing room; custom wardrobes and storage in stone, glass, and metal. On the wall, brass wall lights by Joseph Dirand; chair by Geraldo de Barros.

