

THOUGHTFUL MINIMALISM

A strict palette and a functional approach to design produces luxurious results in this new build on the outskirts of Bruges

Words **CLARE SARTIN** Photography **AMBROISE TEZENAS/PHOTOFOYER**



When Thomas Ostyn purchased a patch of land on the verdant outskirts of the Belgian city of Bruges, he already had big plans. The third generation of the innovative family behind kitchen brand Obumex, he had extensive experience working with the world's leading architects, from John Pawson to Joseph Dirand, but for his own home – a family space to share with his wife Julie and their three children – he craved a fresh perspective.

'I wanted to work with a young and talented architect,' says Thomas, who envisioned a close collaboration on this most personal of projects. Brussels-based Nicolas Schuybroek was the ideal man for the job. 'His architecture is timeless but up-to-date, and he has a very diplomatic and empathetic approach to working with clients,' explains Thomas. What's more, Nicolas went to boarding school in the nearby town of Loppem so knew the area well.

The first task for the duo was to decide on the tight edit of materials that makes this build unique. Together, they settled on *muschelkalk*, a type of sedimentary rock known for its layers of fossils (from German it translates as 'shell-bearing limestone'), sandblasted aged oak and metal for the interior. Outside, elongated grey bricks lend the building a sleek solidity. 'For me, a house is a place to relax, so I didn't want visual excess,' says Thomas. 'That's why we kept the palette simple and consistent.'

The minimalist layout of this home was also carefully considered. 'It needed to contain and absorb the energy of Thomas's three young children,' notes Nicolas, who designed a pavilion-like

property with no traditional front or back. Instead, every external element is equally important – whether it be the doorway where the family change out of their dirty shoes after walks in the countryside or the grand entrance that greets guests. 'The architecture is interesting from all angles,' adds Thomas.

Inside, the interest continues, with a core living space – kitchen, dining area and living room – acting as an open-plan hub around which family life circulates. 'So many people only use about 20 to 30 per cent of their houses. They provide their homes with spaces that only come into use for special occasions, like a dinner party,' says Thomas, who strove instead for a design where no area is wasted. To this end, much of his property is multifunctional. The main bedroom is also a snug, not just a place to sleep, while the dining room doubles as an office or a bar.

There's a practicality to Thomas and Nicolas's vision, but function does not overtake form here. Luxury exudes from every detail, whether it be the statement kitchen – designed by Joseph Dirand as part of Obumex's 'Signature' collection – or the furniture, which includes vintage classics by Pierre Jeanneret and Jorge Zalszupin.

Even when it comes to these prized pieces, though, Thomas's approach is unshakeably pragmatic. 'However valuable it may be, a kitchen or a chair is designed to be used. Why would you buy a Ferrari if you can only look at it? My motto is: surround yourself with less stuff, but choose better and enjoy it to the fullest.' obumex.be/ns-architects.com

Living room The huge mantelpiece is crafted from *muschelkalk* and is bespoke. To the right of the elm coffee table – a custom design by architect Nicolas Schuybroek – are two white 'Ipanema' armchairs by Jorge Zalszupin for Etel ▶





Living room Above the sofa by Christian Liaigre is an egg-shaped artwork by Gavin Turk from Maruani Mercier gallery. The vintage wood and rattan chairs and bench (now reissued by Cassina) are by Pierre Jeanneret, as is the pigeonhole desk in the study area at the back. The artwork above it is by Ethan Cook and the table lamp on the back shelf is the 'Brasilia LP' by Michel Boyer for Ozone ▶



Kitchen Wide floorboards from Arbonly link this space visually to the living room beyond, as does the use of *muschelkalk*. Here, the stone adds interest to the chunky, minimalist lines of Joseph Dirand's 'Signature' kitchen for Obumex. Around the extended island sit vintage Pierre Jeanneret chairs (also now available from Cassina). The pendant lights are the 'Brasilia S' by Michel Boyer for Ozone ▶



Dining room Lined with cupboards concealed behind sandblasted aged-oak doors, this space features a bespoke table by Nicolas. The walnut seats surrounding it are from Miyazaki Chair Factory and vintage Louis Weisdorf pendant lights hang above. Through the open door to the terrace can be seen Charlotte Perriand chairs and a custom sofa in Belgian linen. The coffee table is another bespoke piece by Nicolas



Hallway A carved styrofoam console unit by Rick Owens sits in this airy, welcoming space. It is lit from above by a tubular pendant light, another piece designed by Nicolas, which descends from a double-height void ►



Bathroom Again honed from *muschelkalk*, the double sink and bath in this space have a monolithic quality that is softened by the caramel tones in the stone. The mirror is bespoke and the taps are from CEA Design



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Bedroom Calm is key here, with an artwork by Jessica Sanders above the bed setting the mood. A suede headboard extends behind the custom-designed bedside table and vintage 'Bidone' wall lamp by Luigi Caccia Dominioni - try Vinterior. The clear glass water jug and glass set are from When Objects Work See [Stockists page](#) for details **ED**