

Northern comfort

In the 1950s, the Scandinavians won us over with their understated, elegant, affordable designs. Now a new generation is finding stylish ways to live simply

Clean-limbed, understated, modern and functional, Scandinavian design has been one of the most influential forces shaping our interiors since the middle of the 20th century, its specific coup being to pull off a balance between the individual creativity of genius designers and the accessibility that comes from mass production. A touch of the north — a Tulip table, an Artichoke light, a couple of Ant chairs — has filtered into countless British homes, and the tradition began by masters such as Eero Saarinen, Poul Henningsen and Arne Jacobsen is being continued by a new generation of creatives.

Magnus Englund, owner and founder of the design store Skandium, says the new Nordic look is inspired by science, with intriguing shapes based on the irregular forms of stealth aircraft and battleships. The style is completely contemporary-looking, and a way for Scandinavians to come up with designs that most certainly do not look back to the "golden age" of the 1950s.

Englund's top guns are furniture by the design/architect trio Claesson Koivisto Rune for Offecct (Sweden) and Iittala (Finland), and the Crushed bowl by JDS Architects (Denmark) for Muuto. I particularly like Neo Pots, a range of sleek aluminium cookware by Claesson Koivisto Rune for Iittala (a 2.4-litre pot costs £79; 020 7584 2066, www.skandium.com).

The 2010 collection by Ferm Living also has a scientific theme (ferm-living.com). Ferm is a Danish design company founded by Trine Andersen in 2005, whose innovative graphics were such a huge hit last year — remember those gorgeous birdcage wall stickers (£34.95; 95percentdanish.com)? This season's range includes Bunsen burner-shaped candle holders, stoppered glass chemistry flasks and decorative molecule sets

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as tabletop accessories (coloured balls held together in complex patterns by wooden sticks). Arts students feeling marginalised should try the Pouf Pouf: cosy knitted blobs, in aqua, yellow, coral or charcoal cotton, that can be foot rests or spare seats (30cm diameter, £69; designmyworld.net).

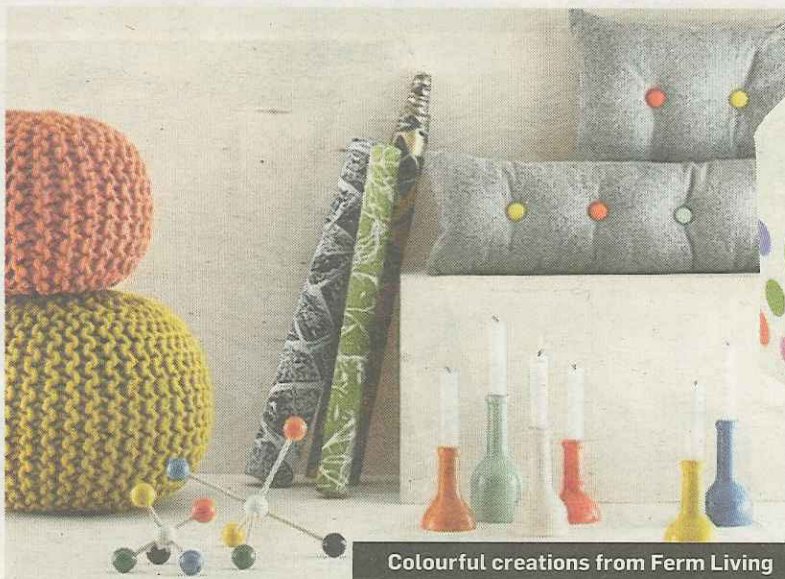
This year is also a time to rediscover some of the Scandinavian classics, but with a twist. The famous Egg chair, for example, created in 1958 by Jacobsen for the SAS Royal Hotel in Copenhagen, is being relaunched by Fritz Hansen as the Golden Era Egg (£3,545; 01273 699119, thelollipopshoppe.co.uk). The familiar curves are clad in delicately textured woven fabric, in pale, earthy tones instead of the customary pop colours, and the new version comes with a velvet seat cushion.

Another remix of a successful design, available from the end of March, is Hans Wegner's Wishbone seat for Carl Hansen. This dining chair, with its Y-shaped backrest, has been popular since its launch in 1950, and will re-emerge in a new range of blues, from periwinkle to dark denim (£510; 01273 699119, thelollipopshoppe.co.uk). Poul Henningsen's PH5 light, designed for Louis Poulsen Lighting, was rereleased to celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2008.

The PH50, as the new version is known, is available in a delicious palette of chili red, coconut white, mint blue, olive black and wasabi green (£440; 020 7584 2066, www.skandium.com).

It is impossible to overstate how great the Scandis are at sturdy, good-looking kitchen basics. Katherina Saunders, a sturdy, good-looking designer of Norwegian extraction, whose kitchen cupboards I have often admired, has launched an indispensable painted-wood coat rack with six hooks (90cm x 13cm, £40; ellaskitchencompany.com).

Staying in the kitchen, the Muuto table, by the Swedish firm TAF Architects, is an extraordinarily stylish take on the traditional wooden farmhouse number, in pale oak and coloured steel (W90cm x L200cm x H73cm, £1,295; thelollipopshoppe.co.uk). Sagaform's Swedish kitchen products — including



Colourful creations from Ferm Living



Hanne Rysgaard's prettily patterned cartons are made from porcelain; from £36



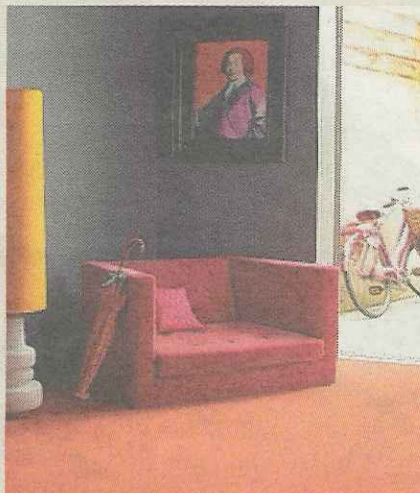
INNER VISION

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Emily Leppenwell rounds up the best buys and bargains for your home

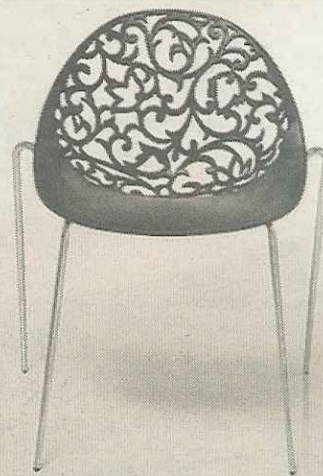
Colour me special £29 per sq metre

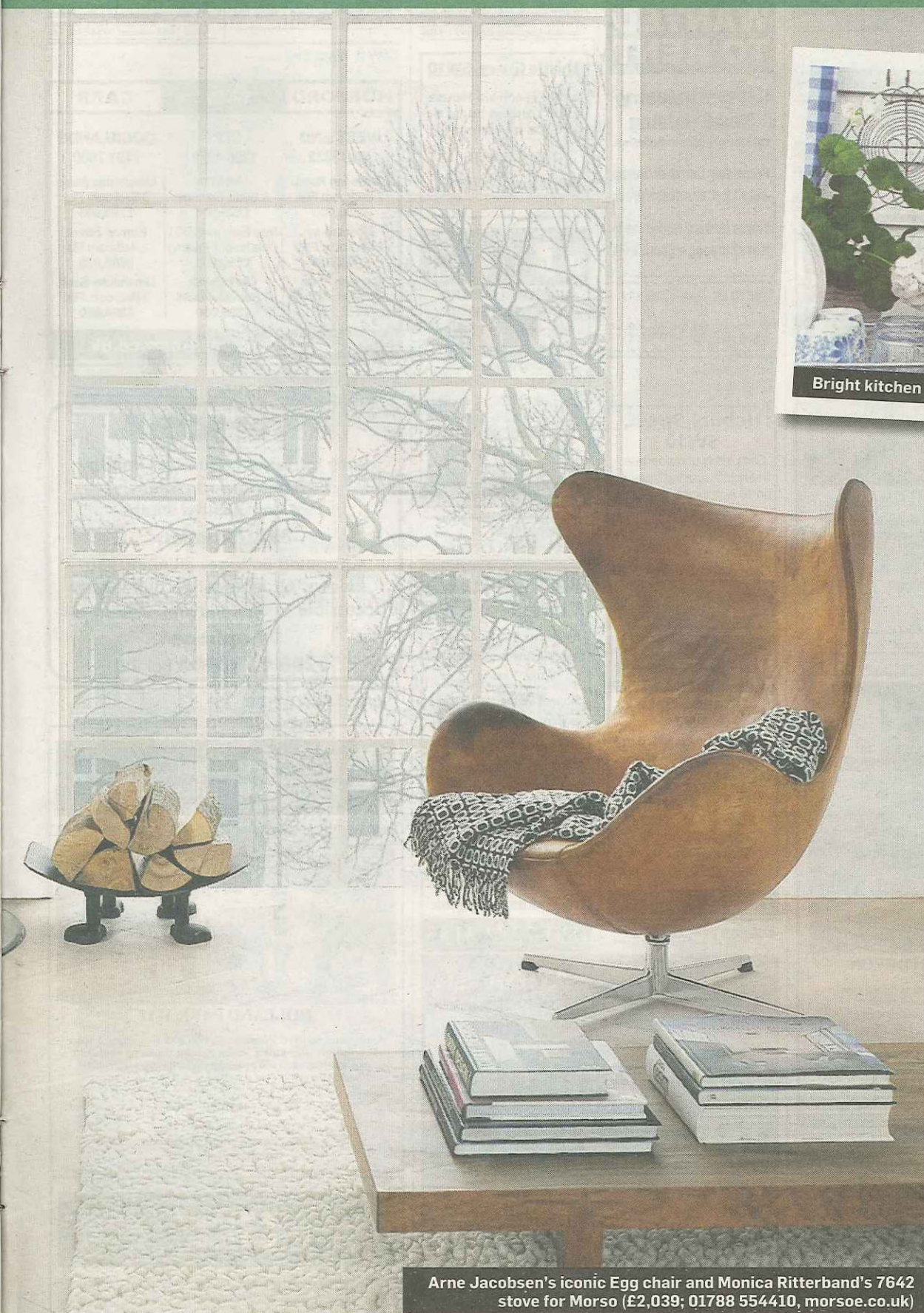
Bare floorboards look great, but if they're too cold and draughty for you, perhaps it's time to take another look at carpets. Fun on the Floor, an umbrella website that offers the latest trends and practical tips from a panel of interiors experts, also has links to 14 retailers. I particularly love the juxtaposing of vibrant block colours, such as this Zen saxony carpet in orange from Lano, against dark and brooding colour schemes. funonthefloor.com



Dine with me £125

If your aspirations are set firmly above Ikea, but your purse strings won't stretch to designer showrooms, then take a look at Loveyourhomeforless.com. Its online furniture collection offers a great range of styles, from contemporary and traditional pieces to hand-picked finds from around the globe, including this Aurora dining chair, available in black and white. 01483 410007, loveyourhomeforless.com





Arne Jacobsen's iconic Egg chair and Monica Ritterband's 7642 stove for Morso (£2,039; 01788 554410, morsoe.co.uk)



Bright kitchen cloths from jangneus-design.com



Ferm Living's Branches wall sticker (£75; scandiliving.com)



A Raw hand-carved lounge chair by Muuto (£590; thelollipopshoppe.co.uk)

carafes, boards, graters and cheese knives — are examples of form and function in perfect balance (two-litre carafe £20; 0845 604 9049, johnlewis.com).

New stoves created by Monica Ritterband for Morso reflect the Danish concept of "hygge": a cosy tranquillity that would have been most welcome in British kitchens this winter (from £1,996; 01788 554410, morsoe.co.uk). Talking of cosiness, Linum has launched a range of inexpensive striped seat cushions for kitchen chairs. The Lund design, which is 100% cotton, in red, white and blue, costs £15 (40cm square; scandiliving.co.uk).

If you are in the market for something colourful and quirky, Hanne Rysgaard's covetable cartons could be just the ticket (hannerysgaard.com). The Danish designer has been in the UK for 18 years and works in a hybrid idiom she calls "Scandenglish". From her studio/store in Bristol, she turns out porcelain slipcast milk cartons and bottles decorated with chintzy floral transfers, in sizes from teeny (175ml carton, £36) to tall (350ml carton, £45; notonthehighstreet.com).

My favourite Scandi discoveries this year, however, are cheerily patterned homewares by the Swedish illustrator Lotta Kuhlhorn. Her Big Apple mug is precisely what the name suggests — a bone-china mug printed with an apple motif in a choice of colours, including green, pale blue and red (£9.95; 01872 276869, illustratedliving.co.uk).

Sandra Isaksson, a Swedish graphic designer based in West Sussex, produces ferociously funky printed wallpapers, trays and posters under the company name Isak. She says of her new Fika cup: "Fika means to sit down and have a cuppa, relax, eat some cookies. This is always done at 11 in the morning in Sweden. Then again at 3pm, then again after dinner." This I'm inclined to believe, but her explanations can be, let us say, folkloric. Isaksson confides of one of her bestsellers, the birchwood-ply Blossom and Bill tray (38cm diameter, £25; isak.co.uk): "It is handmade in Sweden by trolls."

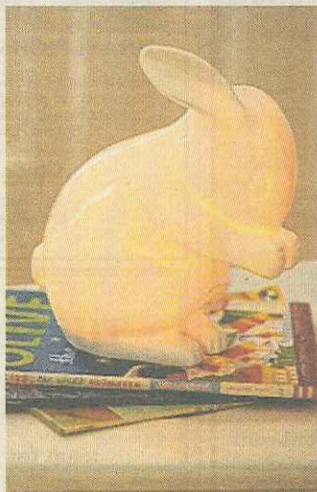
NORDIC AND NICE

See more classic and cutting-edge Scandinavian designs at timesonline.co.uk/interiors



Follow the white rabbit £60

Let your children's imagination take a leap down the rabbit hole at bedtime, or simply add a touch of nostalgia to a grown-up space with this shamelessly cutesy rabbit lamp. Made of bone china, it gives off a lovely warm glow, and would work well nestled on a bookshelf surrounded by other cherished possessions. 0845 259 1359, notonthehighstreet.com



Stop the rot £95

This pine unit (H46cm x W52cm x D40cm) is a more attractive way to store vegetables than one of the many plastic or metal options available, and can be neatly tucked away inside a cupboard. The three drawers will keep your tubers nice and shady, while the slatted drawer bases allow cool air to flow freely. 0845 608 4448, gardentrading.co.uk



Steal of the week Walk-in shower was £866, now £577

This walk-in shower enclosure by Aqualux (W140cm x D90cm x H195cm) combines a generous showering space with an integrated drying area. plumbworld.co.uk

