

N O R D I C  
M O O D S



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A GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL INTERIOR DECORATION

Katrine Martensen-Larsen

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KIRA BRANDT

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# PREFACE

Katrine Martensen-Larsen

We Danes have traditionally spent a lot of time and effort on our homes and interiors. The often cold climate and long dark winters naturally mean spending many hours indoors, which is why we so appreciate a cosy and beautiful interior ambience. Despite our long design history, I find that most people I visit tend to live rather similarly – with a neutral colour palette, sombre lighting, an abundance of too many indifferent items and furniture that is out of proportion and style to their space and architecture. It is remarkable that so many live so impersonally, in homes which look more like the display spaces one might see in various home furnishing stores, and in no way reflecting the person who actually lives there.

I feel that a home is far more interesting if the décor clearly mirrors who lives there. It can be a colourful home; a home filled with art, books or other exciting finds and collections; or a home that is completely minimalistic. This isn't about ugly, nice or even a specific style. It's more about moods.

My own philosophy for interior designing is that by creating an atmosphere with your décor, you automatically have a personal home. A good starting point in the quest for designing a cosy and beautiful setting is to adapt to your surrounding architecture and nature. To understand your own style is tantamount to interior designing with that ever-important personal touch. And finding your own individual style can be a difficult and confusing journey.

With this book I guide you, with the help of moodboards, to discover and develop your own personal style. By showing how to create moodboards, I explain what they can be used for, and how you can work on them. The book illustrates a number of interior design pointers. You are also invited into nine carefully chosen beautiful and cosy homes, belonging to people who have truly grasped the art of creating personal ambience. Along the journey, you will also learn a range of my best interior design tips – such as the art of restraint, patterns and colour palettes; the proportion of furniture, lighting, curtains, carpets; and not least the personal impression you can apply to your design with works of art.

I myself grew up in a home surrounded exclusively with Danish design. Kaare Klint, Børge Mogensen, Wegner, PH, Le Klint, Schlegel and Poul Kjærholm were the designers behind all fixtures, lighting and furnishing. Works of art by the likes of Brendekilde, Høst and Hornung adorned our walls.

My father specialized in selling Danish handcrafted furniture and my mother was an interior designer, until they founded Tapet-Cafe together (just outside Copenhagen). The business is now run by my talented brother, Jannik Martensen-Larsen.

My younger years were spent in England, and it was here that my love for English country style truly began. Upon returning to Denmark, my designs were a Nordic interpretation of English country but as my ideas matured, more and more Danish design crept in. It was not until I truly became an adult that I really understood my parents' tastes – especially my mother's. It is completely due to her inspiration that I am able to write this book.

My new home has been built and designed in collaboration with my partner Henrik Falk, who is a trained and skilled joiner and carpenter. I enjoyed all the sparring we had during the décor process, but especially his technical knowledge and building capabilities. Everyone should be able to live with a skilled carpenter.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to all you lovely people who have opened the doors to your atmospheric homes, so that we can breathe in some inspiration and ideas.

Finally, loving thanks and acknowledgement to my editor, Lil Vad-Schou, Denmark's most talented crafter of books; my Danish publisher Lars Strandberg, for believing in the project; my international publisher Niels Famaey at Lannoo Publishing for publishing NORDIC MOODS internationally; my lovely friend and talented graphic designer Julie Secher Kau; and last but absolutely not least Kira Brandt, for the most beautiful images, our lovely friendship and the whole journey involved in publishing this book.





# BEFORE AND AFTER

## Examples

In this section you are provided with four small examples of how to use the moodboard, working from a shell-like, almost empty room to finished décor. I show you my cosy reading corner arrangement in a high-ceilinged living room, an inviting bedroom I created in a small apartment, my establishment of a new kitchen in a narrow elongated space, and a rescue plan I carried out in a bathroom that was newly built but in completely the wrong materials.

# LIVING ROOM

## A cosy reading corner

White walls and a grey–black armchair or sofa. A familiar scenario. Here, I show how one can relatively easily transform completely anonymous décor into a reading corner with ambience and personality. The room is a beautifully airy studio in a neoclassical house in Frederiksberg.

Take your moodboard and place the existing materials on it. In this case, that would be the three pale shades painted on the floor, panelling and wall. In addition, the dark grey wool upholstered armchair fabric and a piece of black leather, which can represent the lamp's base and shade.

Now play with different fabric options for cushions and curtains, and see what suits the existing materials. Once you're satisfied, it's time to add the elements that will help bring soul into the interior. I ended up with a thick striped curtain fabric and a herringbone pattern for the cushion. Discreet colours, yet with a noticeably delicate blue in the striped curtain fabric, bringing life to the otherwise neutral tones.

By looking at the moodboard, you can see that pewter plays well with the grey, black, blue and beige shades. So one idea could be to find a vintage pewter vase, fill it with hydrangeas – perhaps from your own garden – and place it on a stack of magazines on the floor. A necklace of small carved wooden African beads or something similar can lie next to the vase. You can find a similar wall painting at any flea market. And finally, a Moroccan Beni Ouarain rug for the floor.



# BEDROOM

## When the bed has to be visible

In this example I show you how to decorate an inviting bedroom, in reality a two-room apartment where there has to be a sleeping space in the living room. How do you manage both bed and sofa in the same small space?

Most people would choose a sofa bed, but converting from the bed back to sofa and vice versa each morning and evening is often an unrealistic solution. Why not instead make a virtue out of necessity. Allow a gorgeous double bed in the space, with a fabric-covered headboard and large pillows, making it both sofa and bed.

The bed headboard consists of 16-millimetre chipboard upholstered with 50-millimetre foam and then fabric stretched over the front. It's a good idea to choose a single-coloured fabric to avoid seaming issues. The headboard can then be almost as high as the fabric is wide. Remember that it should be 20 centimetres wider than the bed itself – allowing for 10 centimetres on both sides. Wall brackets are mounted on the back of the headboard, although hanging it on the wall is not an absolute necessity. In some cases it can be enough for it just to stand on the floor spanning wall and bed.

For a fresh and relaxed look, you can leave the bed ready-made, with delicious chalk-white linens and a piece of fabric draped over the bottom of the bed. Should you want to go for a double bedspread, it's a good idea to select double-width fabric, avoiding an annoying seam down the middle of the bedspread. If you do have to sew the fabric together, you will achieve a nicer outcome by having one entire width in the middle, dividing the other fabric width into two, then sewing it down along each side. Avoid thick quilted bedspreads: they are outdated, heavy and impractical.

The colour palette is cool and relaxing. It consists of chalk white, grey and aqua. I have mixed cotton, linen and velour fabrics. They are soft and natural, nice to sleep in, easy to make the bed with, and washable. The wall is painted in a delicate grey and the old pine floor has been sanded and applied with white soap after a lye treatment.



# No 2

Furniture

Before choosing furniture, look at the proportions of your room. Large rooms require large furniture, while small rooms need smaller and preferably lighter furniture. I often see examples of people placing monstrous corner sofas in small living rooms, and it simply doesn't work. It may be comfortable, but from an aesthetic point of view, it isn't a good idea. For small living rooms, I feel one should consider sofas on legs, so they are raised up from the floor. This gives a lighter look. See page 103.

If you lack the storage, your home has limited space, and if you have a balcony or terrace, it would be a good idea to consider acquiring furniture that works both indoors and out.

Many tend to place their furniture along the walls. I personally prefer to set the items a little further out, where they take occupancy of the room more confidently. On the plus side they are also easier for you to navigate around, reaching the windows and different parts of the room, for example. Think of a winding and meandering drive up to a charming country house. This image can be transferred to imagining your interior. A little detour to get to the balcony door, or from the couch and out into the kitchen, definitely doesn't hurt. See page 194.

If you have a very large living room, an elegant way to decorate it could be to place several smaller sofa groups in the same room, but keep the mix in mind. Some of the furniture should be voluminous and heavier, while others can be lighter and airy. If all elements are of the same type, the arrangement has a tendency to become either too bombastic or too spacey. See pages 118-119.

Another important point to bear in mind is that tables and sofas should be facing in different directions. To illustrate, if you have a large living space containing a dining area, workplace and sofa group, then it works best if the tables are different shapes. The sofa arrangement ought to be positioned between dining and work spaces, so that furniture of the same type is separated and the shapes are broken up. A nice thing to do if you can is to place your desk so you can look towards the room when you work, rather than into a wall. Needless to say, this option requires space. See page 45.

It is elegant to mix the furniture forms. For example, if your desk is rectangular, I suggest you choose an oval or circular dining table. It can be rather uninspiring if all the furniture in a square room is square.

If you are lucky to have some good vintage furniture, do plan your décor and style around it. The quality of furniture from the pre-IKEA era is significantly higher than that of random newer furniture. If the upholstery is too worn or the fabric is too faded, or if the colour doesn't fit, then you can easily give the furniture a new and exciting lift by re-covering it. See pages 50 and 220.

It is relatively expensive to upholster furniture. As a rule of thumb, you can count on the fact that labour costs are just as high as the fabric. If the furniture has commercial or personal sentimental value, it can easily be justified. Covering in leather is more expensive than with fabric, but leather has advantages, not least in terms of durability.

Be careful when selecting textiles for reupholstery. All fabrics come with numerical information as to how much wear the fabric can withstand. A sofa should have up to 60,000 martindale units, while a decorative chair, for example, need only be upholstered in fabrics with 20,000 martindale units. Also, consider how much sunlight the piece will be exposed to. There are many textiles and leathers that bleach in the sun.

If you like, give your furniture extra finesse by choosing roleau trimming, piping or cord for the edges. For example, one can use leather piping for a canvas upholstered piece – or vice versa. Talk to your upholsterer about the possibilities. Or ask an interior designer for advice.

When you send your furniture to the upholsterers, I recommend that it be looked at properly while you have the opportunity. The springs may need tightening, the padding could do with new filling, or the girdles may be in need of repair. Always use an experienced upholsterer and do remember to get an estimate or a final price before you get started.

# Moodboard

Here, they have wisely worked with coastal colour tones. The house is situated on Strandvejen ("the beach road"), and what could be more appropriate than including as much nature as possible. The palette is white, grey, beige, cool blues and brown, with a few individual touches of eggshell, succulent green and some pastels. These latter hues can only be seen in a handful of unique trinkets and by way of flowers and branches brought in from the garden.

Mirroring the colour palette, the materials are completely natural: wood, Öland tiling, marble, leather, wool and cotton. There are no frills here, and they are not missed. These frames are enough in themselves, and all in all they bind an eclectic styling blend of old and new, feminine and masculine.



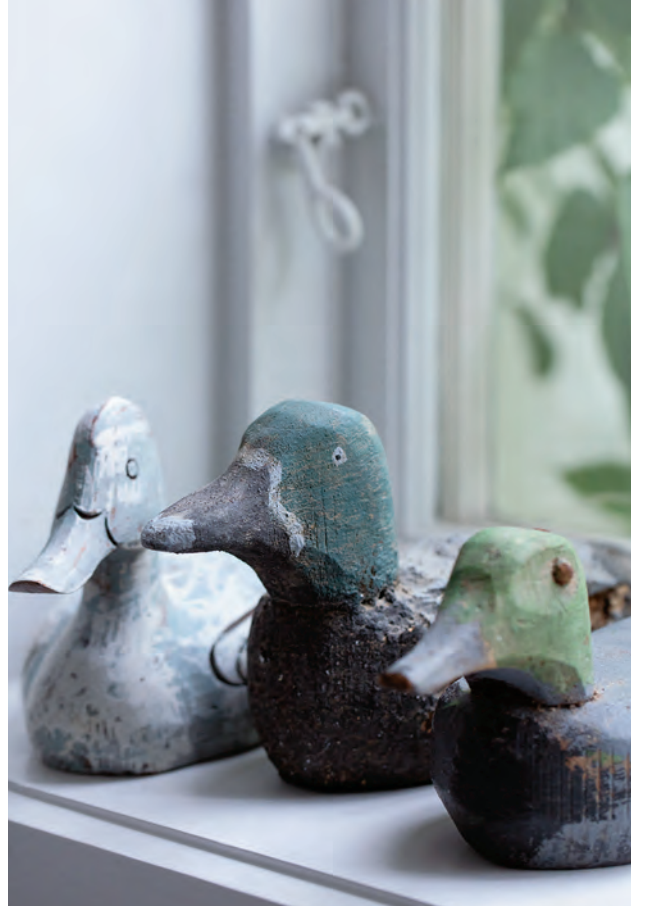




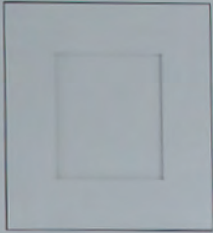
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## NORDIC MOODS

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