

ELLE DECORATION

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MAY 2025

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OF SCANDI  
MINIMALISM  
REALLY OVER?

HOW TO  
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at home with



Cool, crisp and contemporary. Not usually the words used to describe a countryside bolthole, but then again, this home's owner, Brigitta Spinocchia Freund, is always keen to lean into the unexpected. At the London-based interior designer's Sussex family retreat, a converted barn she shares with her husband and three tweens, the vibe may be 'easy, cosy and comfortable,' she says, 'but it has been decorated with love and style in mind'.

Buying post-pandemic in 2021, Brigitta was drawn to the area near Lewes to be closer to one of her best friends. 'There is a different energy there – lots of amazing, interesting people, biodynamic farm shops, good gastropubs,' she explains. 'It was the perfect antidote to escaping the busyness of London. It has a sense of wholesomeness that really grounds all of us and encourages the kids to get into the fresh air and away from their screens.' Already converted by a previous owner, the house, says Brigitta, 'was a clean space, but in fact too clean' – and therefore ripe for a rethink. With a career spanning almost two decades in design and property development, having first honed her craft as creative director of Candy & Candy (which she also helped to found ▶

## Arcadian rhythm

*Interior designer Brigitta Spinocchia Freund took a boldly contemporary approach to her family's country retreat, complete with a mud-defying white-and-cream living room*

WORDS: **FIONA MCCARTHY**  
PHOTOGRAPHY: **KATE MARTIN**

**From top** Brigitta Spinocchia Freund at home in her converted Sussex barn; the living room, with its generous vintage Afro and Tobia Scarpa for Cassina 'Soriana' sofa from Béton Brut to the left, and a 1960s low-slung sofa with Perspex sides from Danish Homestore reupholstered in sheepskin. The curtains were woven by Dedar in a print by the designer. On the floor is a wool 'Collins' rug by Stark with a 1950s teak-and-metal bench by Charlotte Perriand, found on 1stDibs, used as a coffee table. The wooden stools are another Perriand design, from London dealer Tanguy Rolin



with brothers Christian and Nick Candy in 1999) before going out on her own, the designer is no stranger to high-end luxury. Yet here, the house's laid-back look and feel was distinctly driven by her children.

Surrounded by rolling hills, with windows looking out onto lush, verdant meadows and rooms flooded with abundant natural light from both front and back, the house was intended to be filled with 'easy, intimate spaces that feel really comfortable,' she explains. 'When we first looked at this place, the kids loved it because it was cosy, with a gas fire, and it was somewhere we could all be together, literally in each other's pockets. The last thing they wanted it to be was fancy,' the designer laughs. Although it has



five bedrooms, the scale is 'very modest', Brigitta says of its cossetting charm. The whitewashed walls were lent warmth when repainted in custom colours imbued with subtle shades of pale green, buttery yellow and cool taupe. The beams were scrubbed back to bring out the grain, and the kitchen was given an update with freshly painted cupboards and a wooden island. Otherwise 'it was all thrown together on a budget,' she asserts. 'We said to ourselves, let's not try to reinvent the wheel and redo everything; let's just make it simple, relaxed and very comfortable.' This didn't mean compromising, however, on Brigitta's love of characterful original mid-century classics, such as the 1940s sheepskin Philip Aretander 'Clam' chair and curved 'Soriana' sofa designed by Afra and Tobia Scarpa for Cassina in the living room, and the set of sharply silhouetted Jean Prouvé 'Standard' chairs adorning the dining space.

**Brigitta's love of characterful mid-century pieces is evident in the 'simple, relaxed' scheme**

**From top** A 1950s Leonardo Fiori for ISA bookcase, showcasing quirky objets d'art and ceramics found on Brigitta's travels, creates a division between the living and dining spaces; original 'Standard' dining chairs by Jean Prouvé are teamed with a reclaimed wooden farm table bought from a small vintage dealer, Tinker and Toad, in East Sussex. In the corner stands a 1960s Vuillermoz 'Polyhedron' bar cabinet that was found on 1stDibs. On the wall, painted in Farrow & Ball's 'Ball Green', a collection of edition prints and sketches bring colour and energy to the space

## at home with



**Clockwise from top left** In the compact but cosy kitchen, Brigitta has mixed 'Mawu' dining chairs, upholstered in bouclé, by Laura Gonzalez, with a 'Deepah' oak table by Atelier Pandhapa, both from The Invisible Collection. A wooden kitchen island found locally displays the designer's collection of Bordallo Pinheiro cabbage earthenware pieces; an original Philip Arctander 'Clam' chair covered in sheepskin, bought at auction, completes the living space's vintage vibe; a 1970s Vivai del Sud rattan and Perspex table found on holiday in Italy adorns the entrance hall, doubling as a drinks table, dressed with a vintage tray and cocktail paraphernalia from secondhand shops

As with her recent projects, including the impressive five-storey, six-bedroom Collector's House she has decorated in London's multimillion-pound Chelsea Barracks development, and the upcoming 'Curator's Room' in collaboration with Stark Carpets for this year's WOW!House at Design Centre Chelsea Harbour, Brigitta's focus is always on collectibles. 'I don't want to spend loads of money on buying new furniture,' she says. 'My theory is that I'd rather have three or four pieces that are really well done, and then compromise on things like the beds (the bases, not the mattresses),' she says. With collectibles, originals rather than re-editions, 'at least you can reupholster or resell them. I feel there's more value in that'.

In the living room, for example, Brigitta wanted one sofa to be really long, to fit the family of five. She found the relatively inexpensive, three-metre, vintage Perspex sofa online, repaired its base, which had started to sag a little and reupholstered it in sheepskin. 'I always buy key staples first and then work out where they'll go. Obviously I wouldn't buy something that doesn't fit, but there always has to be a comfort element to it, as well as a sense of provenance to help tell a story.' Into >



# at home with



**From left** The designer with her dog Pepsi on a 'Vendôme 160/240' sofa in bouclé by Pierre Augustin Rose from The Invisible Collection in the main bedroom. The headboard was upholstered in Pepe Peholzer 'Derby' velvet, and the bed dressed in bespoke bedlinen, Gucci cushions and a Loewe throw. The walls are finished in Paint and Paper Library's 'Clay II'; in the room of Brigitta's oldest child, a vintage desk and football-stand chair create a teen-appropriate corner. The 'Grashoppa' lamp is by Gubi and the walls are painted in Dulux's 'Energetic Watertide'



this mix, the designer has added soft, squishy rugs that everyone loves to lie on, quirky vintage finds, like a 1970s rattan and Perspex drinks table, as well as contemporary touches, such as a bronze side table by the Campana Brothers and 'Mawu' kitchen chairs designed by Laura Gonzalez. A 50s bookcase cleverly partitions the living room from the dining space, market-find vases and framed art by the children bring pops of colour, and the Charlotte Perriand coffee table (a Spinocchia Freund favourite) works perfectly with the streamlined seating. 'A lot of life happens at ground level, such as playing cards,' Brigitta says.

The only possible faux pas, she laughingly admits, was having everything in the living room in shades of white and cream. 'My friend said, you have three children and three dogs, are you mad? This will be a nightmare,' she remembers. 'I was, like, it will be fine. I'm not that precious. If it gets dirty, what's the worst thing that can happen? A sofa needs reupholstering or we have to change a rug.' [spinocchiafreund.com](http://spinocchiafreund.com) **LD**

**Right** In one of the spare rooms, the headboard has been upholstered in Dedar's 'Tiger Mountain' jacquard velvet. A 1950s Cesare Lucca glass-topped magazine table holds a 'Model 1013' table lamp by Pierre Disderot. On the wall hangs *Aware* by Studio Dall'i from PSTR Studio

