

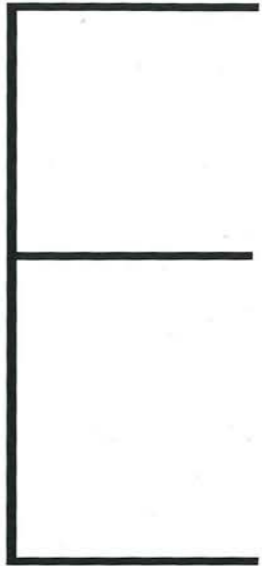
WINDOW ON THE WORLD

Stunning panoramic views of the waterfront were the main attraction for this home's Finnish owners, who left the city behind to live on the coast

Words **EMMA LOVE**
Photography **KRISTA KELTANEN/LIVING INSIDE**



Exterior Owners Juha and Catja Abram snapped up a plot of land in Espoo, Finland, and built their glass-fronted home from scratch
Living room The furniture has been arranged to make the most of the beautiful seaside setting ▶



Espoo is a city that mixes urban culture with waterside living, and it's just a 20-minute boat ride from Finland's capital, Helsinki. Juha Abram and his Spanish wife Catja have always enjoyed the lifestyle of Espoo's Tapiola district, but the opportunity to fulfil a dream and create their own home from scratch led them to move to this stretch of picturesque coastline and woodland.

'We've lived in the area for 15 years, so when we found out that a house on the waterfront was going to be demolished, we bought the land and started building,' recalls Juha of the project, which started in 2011 and took 18 months to complete. 'We had been house-hunting for a long time, but

couldn't find anything to match our vision. This was a chance to combine ideas that we had seen in homes on our travels.'

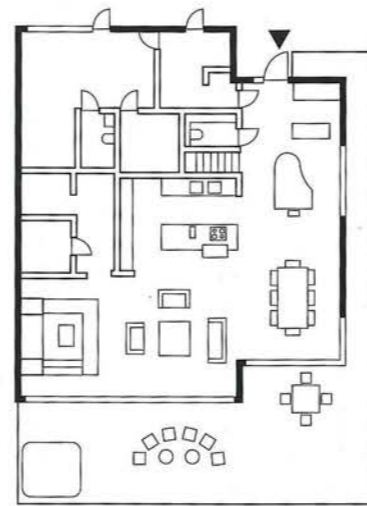
The Abrams instructed local architect Joanna Maury-Ahola to create the 400-square-metre, three-bedroom property. Key to the design are the floor-to-ceiling windows that overlook the water on one side of the building. 'We wanted to be able to look out and see nature – the water, the trees and the park next door,' says Juha.

The couple deliberately situated the bedrooms at the furthest point from the kitchen. 'It means that when we have visitors, the sleeping areas are calm,' says Juha. The house also has a studio with a separate entrance that was designed for the couple's 15-year-old son, Hans, a television room and, of course, a sauna. 'This is very important to Finns,' quips Juha.

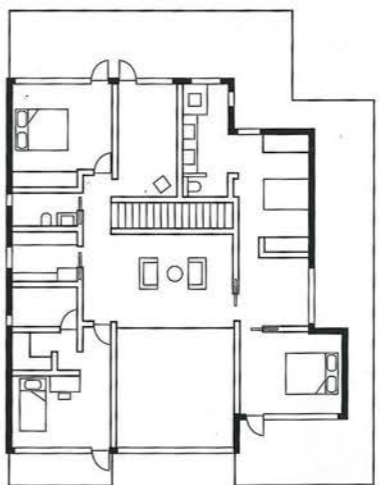
The interior has pale wooden floors and an all-white palette. 'This country is very dark. In the winter there are only a couple of hours of sunshine each day, so we wanted to make the house feel light and spacious,' Juha explains. 'Also, white is a colour that doesn't go out of fashion. It is timeless.'

When they are indoors, the family tend to gather in the kitchen. 'At weekends, I love cooking southeast Asian dishes or traditional smoked salmon with new potatoes and mushrooms,' says Juha. 'My other favourite spot in the house is the sunken seating area in the living room, right by the fireplace, particularly when it's cold outside.'

Over the years, Juha has seen Tapiola develop from a sleepy backwater to a business hub that attracts the headquarters of technology companies. 'My grandmother had a summerhouse here in the 1930s when it was just a fishing village with rowing boats bobbing on the water. Then in the 1950s, the area was developed by architects such as Alvar Aalto and Aarne Ervi. In recent years, Espoo has continued to expand rapidly,' he says. Luckily, though, it still has a good balance: nature is literally on its doorstep. *joarc.fi*



GROUND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

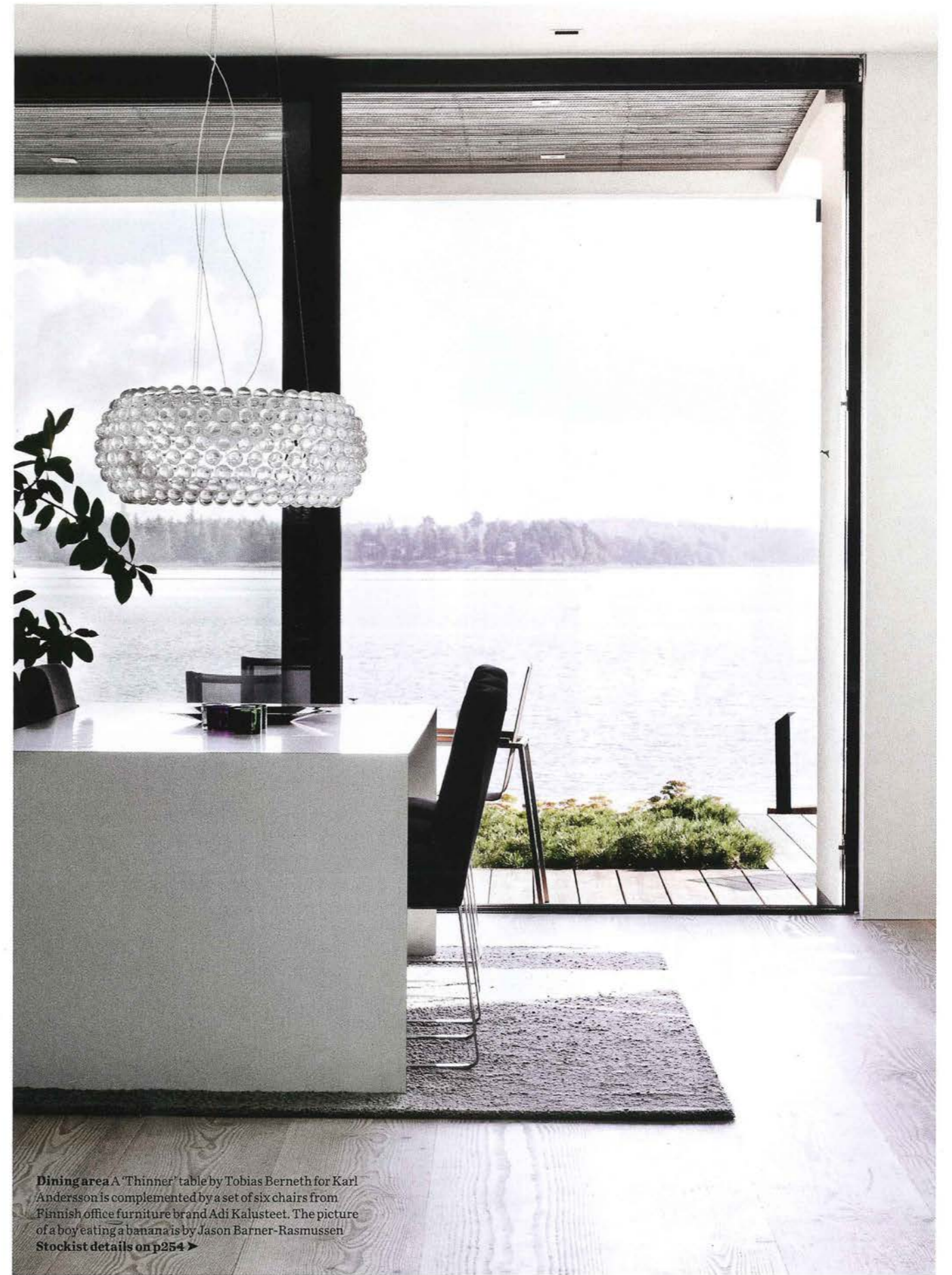
Living room From almost every corner of the open-plan space, the homeowners look out to the water through double-height windows. The interior has pale wood floors and a white colour palette to maximise light, a precious commodity during the dark Finnish winters ►



WHITE WALLS AND PALE WOODEN FLOORS MAKE THE INTERIOR FEEL LIGHT



Living room The family like to gather in this cosy sunken seating area, which surrounds a contemporary fireplace

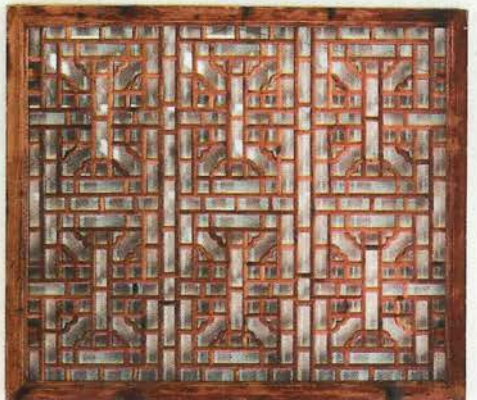
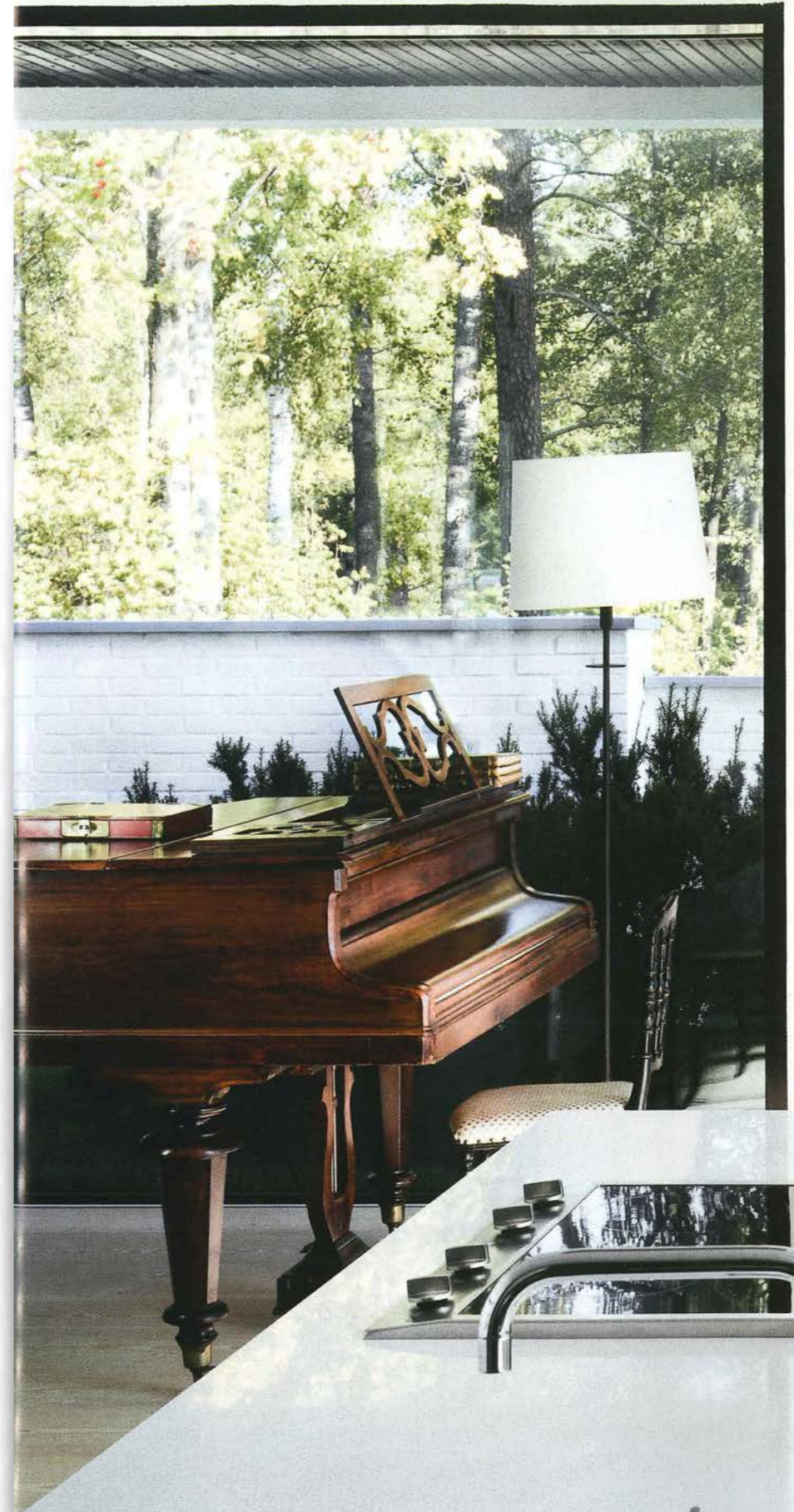


Dining area A 'Thinner' table by Tobias Berneth for Karl Andersson is complemented by a set of six chairs from Finnish office furniture brand Adi Kalusteet. The picture of a boy eating a banana is by Jason Barner-Rasmussen
Stockist details on p254 ▶

'WHITE IS A COLOUR THAT DOESN'T GO OUT OF FASHION. IT IS TIMELESS'



This page The French piano, which dates from the 19th century, is a family heirloom
Opposite The sleek kitchen fits neatly into the corner of this open-plan space
Stockist details on p254





MY COASTAL LIFE

I prefer to live on the coast. I'm definitely a seaside boy at heart.

I love being surrounded by nature. This house is nestled by the water and the woods, but is just a ten-minute drive from downtown Helsinki.

The sea is very calm here – it's almost like a lake, but one that has islands and rocky outcrops. It's not an area for big boats, because the water is too shallow.

In Helsinki, I go to the Market Square. It has recently been renovated and it's my favourite place to visit on a Saturday. I have a cup of coffee and then buy fresh groceries and fish.

We like to explore the islands on the archipelago. I love visiting Suomenlinna – the site of a maritime fortress that has UNESCO World Heritage status – and Iso Vasikkasaari, which has a charming beach and a great restaurant called Gula Villan (gulavillan.fi).



Opposite The kitchen, created by Airas Design and Arrital, has a central island that separates it from the living area
This page The pared-back scheme continues upstairs. A second living room is furnished with a table by Alvar Aalto for Artek and 'Remmi' chairs by Finnish designer Yrjö Kukkapuro for Avarte
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Sauna This contemporary space is decked out with slate walls and floors. The back wall is a steel plate that was deliberately left outdoors to corrode its surface before it was varnished
Bedroom The homeowners' room is simply designed, with a wooden feature wall behind the bed and glass doors that open onto a terrace. The bed is by Finnish brand Muurame
Stockist details on p254 ED

