

Interior architect Elina worked on the design for the whole property. She opened up the downstairs layout by creating new door openings to help light flow from room to room. The Sofa & Chair Company sells similar classic Howard-style sofas (sofas are from Finnish brand Tyylikotka)



Still waters

Restoring a historic house by the sea brought Maria and Markus Lindholm unusual challenges. Transporting building materials by boat and sledge, they revived it with classic Nordic style

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The dining table was custom-made in Helsinki to fit this large room. Specialist furniture maker Kruunun Antiikki worked to Elina's specifications to make the 4.9m-long table. The dining chairs and chandeliers are from a Helsinki antiques shop. The jute rug is from Ikea



celebrating the longest day of the year in their new island home seemed like a midsummer night's dream too far for Maria and Markus. 'If you had asked us a year ago whether we'd be ready to welcome friends and family for a housewarming party on Midsummer's Eve we'd either have laughed or cried,' says Maria. 'There were times when we thought we'd never get our crumbling wreck of a villa into a habitable state.'

Maria and Markus had always spent their summers on the islands dotted around the Finnish capital and when they spotted this house they knew they had found something special. Open views stretched into the steely blue waters of the archipelago, and alongside the main house were a boat house, an orangery, a barn, two smaller houses and a shoreside sauna. 'We loved it, but we knew we were taking on a huge project,' says Maria. 'The house was bombed in the Second World War, rebuilt in a different style in 1948, with a staircase and features that just didn't suit the age of the property. It had lost almost all of its original 1920s charm.'

By the time Maria and Markus stepped in, the villa had been empty for decades and had been on and off the market several times, with very little maintenance in the interim. Its waterfront setting had cast its spell, however. 'Being surrounded by the sea and nature brings a sense of calm to our busy lives,' says Maria. 'And yet it's just a short boat ride from our city home in Helsinki.'

Their journeys weren't always plain sailing. Transporting a 25-tonne truck on one of the flat-bottomed ferries that navigates the shallow waters of the Helsinki archipelago, they prayed for calm seas to keep it and its precious cargo stable. Thankfully, the weather stayed fine and the lorry arrived safely, ready to start work on the villa's new thermal heating system.

Construction was limited to the warmer months at the start of this three-year renovation. However, once the house was watertight under its newly tiled roof, Maria and Markus decided work should continue through the winter. Getting building materials across a frozen sea required a different approach. Using the strong currents to steer their small boat through the ice floes, the couple then hauled the goods on sledges through the forest to the villa. 'We had to monitor the conditions so carefully but when the ice was thick enough we walked right over from the mainland, pulling our sledges behind us, or got help from our neighbour who drove his snowmobile over the ice,' says Markus. 'The lady from the kitchen company had a different day at the office, for sure, when she came to measure up and walked with us over the ice covered with a layer of water!'

No matter what the weather threw at them, it didn't dampen the enthusiasm of the intrepid renovators. Inspired by a nearby property built around the same time as theirs, Maria and Markus planned to replicate its charming 1920s exterior. They also wanted to introduce 21st-century comforts, including a new kitchen, bathrooms and

energy-efficient insulation and thermal heating. 'With an older property, there are always complications,' says Markus, who project-managed the work. 'We discovered that water was building up in the uneven rock under the house and had to drill a couple of wells and install pumps before replacing the rotten timber walls and moving on with the build.'

Interior architect Elina Siltanen-Sjoberg worked with the couple to improve the flow of the inside space and reinstate missing period features. Elina specialises in creating cosy Nordic interiors with an international flavour and is the author of two books on the subject: *Hidden Gems - Home Like a Dream*, and *Charming Rooms*, both published by Cozy Publishing. She worked on the architectural plans for the house and advised Maria on colour schemes, lighting plans, kitchen cabinets and bathrooms to complement the characterful property.

'I've always loved Gustavian style and Elina came up with a scheme that blends the classic Swedish look with some less formal country pieces,' says Maria. 'She and I share a love of antiques and we had long discussions about sourcing the perfect pieces that would look like they have always been here.' Maria also took classes in upholstery and furniture renovation while the work was being completed on the villa and set about reviving her many auction finds with smart new covers and cushions. Maria and Markus also restored the original sauna building by the shore, adding a bedroom-cum-sitting room and a bathroom for guests.

On Midsummer's Eve last year, just hours before guests arrived, the finishing touches were in place to celebrate Maria and Markus' new life in their island home. 'Looking at it now, it's hard to believe it was on the brink of dereliction just a couple of years earlier,' says Maria. 'We feel very lucky to have been able to restore the villa for future generations to enjoy.'

THE STORY

OWNERS Maria and Markus Lindholm spend their summers here with their two children and the family's golden retriever Ronaldo. Maria's background is in fashion and travel, and she is now a full-time mum. Markus works in finance

PROPERTY A traditional timber-built summer villa on an island in the Finnish archipelago, a short boat ride away from Helsinki. The home was originally built in the 1920s but was destroyed by a bomb during the Second World War. It was rebuilt in 1948 in a different style. It has four bedrooms, three bathrooms and separate accommodation for guests in the shoreside sauna building

WHAT THEY DID Maria and Markus restored the property in keeping with its 1920s origins. They replaced rotten windows and walls, tackled damp issues and retiled the roof. They updated the plumbing, heating and electrics, fitted a new kitchen and bathrooms, and swapped out the staircase and fireplaces for period-style replacements. Interior architect Elina Siltanen-Sjoberg (interiorsbyess.com) guided the couple with the space design and décor from the outset

This cosy space is where the family watch TV, made all the cosier with a roomy Swedish Decotique Le Grand Air linen sofa, topped with a throw and cushions by Mulberry Home. The wallpaper mural is the Oilpainting Landscape 9482W from Boråstapeter







LEFT A range cooker from Italian brand Lofra adds traditional charm to the newly fitted kitchen, along with an antique table, and chairs that Maria renovated herself. An old pine plate rack holds some of Maria's vintage plates, chosen specifically to complement the kitchen's fresh green and white colour scheme. For similar single candle brass wall sconces, try Tinsmiths

ABOVE An antique plate rack houses some of Maria's extensive collection of vintage porcelain, including a prized tureen in the classic Fasaani, or pheasant, design from Finnish ceramics company Arabia. The dining room walls are painted in T1718 from Teknos; Little Greene's Portland Stone is a good match

ABOVE RIGHT Interior architect Elina came up with the designs for the new kitchen, with cabinets from Finnish brand Novart. Maria chose the ceramic Belfast sink and traditional tap, for similar try Villeroy & Boch's Farmhouse sink. The Roman blind is from Eurokangas

RIGHT Maria chose painted furniture to help give the house a bright and airy look. This antique cabinet with pinfold detail was originally dark wood but painted in a warm white it fits the Gustavian theme. A seascape painting was a present to the couple







LEFT The veranda is the perfect spot to enjoy the waterfront location. The rattan chairs are antique and the ornate chandelier was an auction find. The Charlot chair from the Finnish Design Shop is similar. Try Bird Trail from Fabrics & Papers for a similar fabric to that of the tablecloth, which is from Finnish textile store Eurokangas

ABOVE Being surrounded by water and getting around by boat is part of the joy of island life. The coastal location is reflected in the palette of greys, soft blues and sandy neutrals used throughout the villa

ABOVE RIGHT The original 1920s staircase had been bomb damaged during the Second World War, and an unsympathetic replacement added in 1948. Eлина redesigned the staircase to be more in keeping with the age of the property, and added timber panelling to the walls, painted in a soft grey-white. The rattan chair is vintage. For a similar jute rug, try Crucial Trading

RIGHT Sandberg's Wilma wallpaper in Grey adds a hint of pattern in the hall, where Maria's prized antique finds complete the elegant look. She renovated this old chair, upholstering the seat with a remnant of Thibaut fabric donated by a friend







LEFT Maria enrolled in furniture restoration classes during the build, thinking it would help her create the traditional look she had in mind. For their son's room, she bought the headboard from Auctionet UK and reupholstered it herself in green velvet. She added an embroidered family monogram to complete its traditional look (and to hide the marks from the hot-glue gun). The check cushion is made in Ian Mankin's Sage, with narrow, brown velvet trim and frills

ABOVE Soft green stripes give a fresh look to the bedroom. Boråstapeter's Falsterbo Stripe wallpaper makes a smart contrast with the trailing trellis curtain, Iliiv's Everglade is a similar design. For a similar armchair, try French Bedroom's Versailles Daddy chair

ABOVE RIGHT Markus and Maria's daughter chose a leafy mural for her room. The Archive Landscape design from Boråstapeter gives the room a spacious feel. The headboard was another auction buy that Maria renovated herself

RIGHT The curtains in this bedroom are from Finnish fabric company Eurokangas. For a similar look, try Sanderson's Orchard Tree Weave fabric, and try Cowshed Interiors for a similar rattan lamp base





ABOVE LEFT Reflecting the soft colours of the archipelago outside, Maria chose a watery blue palette for the main bedroom, which features an upholstered headboard and valance in Andrew Martin's Sprig fabric in Sky, an Indian-inspired floral linen, bringing a tranquil air to the room. The cushions are made from a Thibaut fabric, with a Calm bedspread from Jotex. The table lamp is a vintage find, and the reading light is the Niche from Pooky

LEFT This bedroom corner showcases some of Maria's vintage and antique furniture and accessories gathered from dealers across Finland. Find a classical-style armchair at Brownrigg, and try London Antique Chandeliers for a period-style ceiling light. For a similar colour to the frosty grey walls, try Benjamin Moore's Lake Placid 827 shade

ABOVE It feels like summer all year round in the guest house bathroom, where rattan accessories and a rattan mirror contrast with the coastal-style tongue and groove walls. Maria made the under-counter skirt herself. Ian Mankin's Forfar Stripe is a similar fabric