



Villa Magic.

You can live in a work of art – designed to perfection by your soulmate

“I’ve chosen to market myself not by selling time, but by guaranteeing results. It’s a somewhat different way for architects to work, but my mother is an artist and I grew up with the perception that a piece of art isn’t priced based on the amount of time it took to paint it, but because the artist has talent and the painting evokes a sense of wellbeing in the spectator. I talk about offering our clients the opportunity to live in a work of art – for me, buildings are art,” says Pål Ross.

By Linnea Dunne | Design: Pål Ross

Photos: Mikael Damkier (houses) and James Holm (portraits)

Ross is the architect who has made a name for himself by questioning everything and refusing to put life in a box. “In England, for example, it’s common for architects to work on commission based on a percentage of the building’s cost,” he continues. “Well, I personally struggle to see how that would result in price-optimised buildings.”

To say that he aims to create price-optimised buildings is not the same as to say that they are cheap, however. What matters to Ross is value for mon-

ey. “You can spend the same amount of money in two restaurants, but after one visit you feel robbed, and after the other you feel you really got value for money – because you enjoyed it,” he analogises. “The experience of space is all about how rooms sit in relation to each other, what materials are used and how. It’s like a piece of music – take one you love and throw around the notes, and it won’t make you all that happy anymore. The components are the same, but I know how to work with them; for me, it’s rewarding to frame our customers’ lives in

an environment where every day has a silver lining.”

Villa Magic

In 2014, Ross Architecture & Design completed Villa Magic, a 450-square-metre family home situated on a big piece of land north of Gothenburg with wide-reaching views across the water. A number of unique requirements were considered in the design, which ultimately resulted in an exclusive home with plenty of magic – all rooted in deep interviews with the family members. “I don’t just want to know what they say they want, but understand why they say they want that,” he explains. “I look for the unique personality traits in my customers when creating their home – not one home for him and one for her, but a home that works for both of them. It’s like role play: I imagine being her at times and him at times, and then I isolate myself completely for three days, diving head first into the creative

process where I live in this home as it slowly takes shape.”

Villa Magic came with a number of distinct requirements. Most peculiarly, perhaps, the woman had a huge interest in horse riding while her husband was allergic to horses. Enough said: Ross created a separate entrance with a changing room where she could come back from the stables and get “de-horsed”, in the words of the architect, before entering the shared living spaces. His main interest, meanwhile, was seen to with dedicated spaces for cars and motorcycles, and to suit these fans of social gatherings, Villa Magic also boasts a reasonably central kitchen, yet located in such a way that the dining area does not overlook dirty dishes and other eyesores. The main living room has double ceiling height and colossal glass panels facing south-east, providing stunning views across the pool outside and the

water further away. The master bedroom has access to a hidden roof terrace with a Jacuzzi, perfectly suited for an evening dip, no swimsuit needed.

Healthy homes for strong personalities

“Our goal is to create environments where people are the happiest and healthiest they can be, and that’s why we’re the only Svanen-certified architecture firm in Sweden. It takes huge commitment, but we insist it’s worth doing. Our homes have a critical biological effect on us, and many modern-day illnesses originate this way,” says Ross and uses the fact that trans fats are still not banned and thus still widely used as yet another analogy. “I question this, like I question everything. Why build with materials that make us unwell? Why do houses need to be square?”

Not only does Ross think about our health today and the health of our children; he

also considers what happens when the children are long gone and we get older and less agile. “80 per cent of our houses have lifts – I’ll happily make hallway space redundant in favour of the comfort of having a lift for bringing laundry up or for the days you can no longer manage the stairs,” he says. “We create suite solutions for guests and au-pairs, perfect for a future carer; and I make sure that you can enjoy the lovely views from your bed, for when you need to rest.”

He describes his customers as “strong personalities” who are not afraid of questioning what others take for granted, and in Pål Ross they find a soulmate. Imagine that: to get your soulmate to design you a work of art – and to live in it forever and ever, if you so wish.

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Top left: The stunning Villa Magic, counting a whopping 450 square metres of consciously designed spaces, boasts under-floor heating throughout, and almost all rooms benefit from views of beautiful nature. **Top middle, top right, and bottom middle:** Villa Magic has a big, beautiful fireplace with access from four spaces – “only a quarter of the cost, in a way,” chuckles the architect. **Bottom left:** A sculptural staircase cast in concrete takes you to a deep indoor balcony that doubles up as library and office, enjoying the same stunning views as the main spaces downstairs. **Bottom right:** Pål Ross, the soulmate architect for people who dare to question everything.