



# Nordhus furniture finds a home in Langton Green



**To meet Rikke Mitchell, the designer behind Nordhus Furniture, in her Langton Green showroom, is to be left in no doubt of her passion for bespoke furniture and kitchen design. An immaculate attention to detail, faultless design credentials and a focus on using beautiful, sustainable materials from local suppliers, are all Nordhus hallmarks. Above all, her commitment to delivering furniture that her clients fall in love with shines clear.**

Originally from Denmark, Rikke has lived in Britain for thirty years. She trained as a building surveyor and spent much of her career working in the construction industry. "Design was always part of the job," she says, reflecting on how her furniture business grew organically out of her construction work. "I found that when I was working on a house people would say, 'While you are here, could you just build a wardrobe or a cupboard,' and from this beginning the business grew

organically. In the early days we worked from pop up tents in the garden but now the showrooms and workshops in Langton Green allow us all the space we need to design, make and show our furniture."

Kitchens are Nordhus's most frequent commissions. "I have a little bit of a kitchen obsession," Rikke is happy to admit. "I really enjoy the creativity and process of helping people make the most of their space, either retrofitting existing spaces, or where an extension is being built, I can make suggestions about the plans. It's incredible how different a room can feel when you make the most out of the space available. I don't have a set look or style, and there are no ranges. It's all about a personal service to suit the style of the house and the individual client, so I can do Scandi or a more traditional Shaker look, something classic often with a modern twist."

It is fair to say we have all come to appreciate our homes more than ever before over the last two years, and Rikke and her team have seen customers coming to them with an ever-growing range of requests to help them enjoy domestic luxury. A growing trend has been from clients asking for walk-in wardrobes. Office manager Jo shows me photographs of a recently completed commission they call 'the secret door', where a walk-in wardrobe feels like a magical



discovery, concealed in the panelling. Its seamless, calm aesthetic were achieved by routing handles into the shaker panelling and using concealed hinges. "I really enjoyed the challenge of making the door look like it was part of the panelling," Rikke says. The secret door is a perfect example of what can be achieved when exacting craftsmanship and exciting design come together to create something that could easily be a joy to live with for generations.

Rikke places no limits on what Nordhus can produce. "There is essentially very little we couldn't make," she explains. "Kitchens and wardrobes are our mainstay, but we also really enjoy it when people give us special commissions." An example of this was when a client asked them to design a console table for a living room, giving them full design freedom to make something that would enhance the room. "We made it out of solid walnut and the pattern of the brass inlay was designed to mirror the pattern of the ceiling, while the fretwork on the legs of the table reflected details in the panelling of the room," Rikke says, reflecting on how her designs are sensitive to the house they will be part of. Other projects the team have undertaken include bifold doors, radiator covers, bespoke television units, boot rooms and utility rooms,

display cabinets, and fitted beds, desks and wardrobes, all painted in the client's preferred colour. Recently they completed a teenager's dream of a bedroom, using the latest trend for colour drenched interiors.

After chatting in the design studio, Rikke gives me a tour of the showrooms, where her enthusiasm for the finer details of her work is contagious. This is a peaceful space above the activity of the joinery workshop and paint room below, where clients come after Rikke has been to their home to assess the measurements and potential of the space. "Everything is bespoke, there are no ranges, so we can fully design around the building and the clients' needs. Drawers, cupboards and shelves can be any size or width," says Rikke. The furniture in the showrooms gives clients a sense of what the different options can be when deciding on the details of their project, showcasing different styles of hinges and handles, frames to the ground or with a plinth, edges exposed or not. "All the small but important details," Rikke says, "There is no end to how you can play with different styles." Also displayed in the showroom are samples of tiles and worktops. "We like to work with local suppliers wherever possible," says Rikke, showing me tiles from Mandarin Stone who have a shop in Tunbridge Wells, and a beautiful marble worktop brought to them by Stone of Destiny in Forest Row.

The materials used for each commission are matched to the choice of the client and the style of the project. "We use birch ply a lot because it is sustainable, rigid, durable and lovely," Rikke explains, but they also use poplar and sometimes maple if a client prefers it. "We are always thinking about sustainability. We avoid chip board and things like it, they aren't good for the environment, don't last and don't give us the design freedom that sustainable materials do."

Next on our tour is the large and airy workshop that once housed the Subbuteo factory, where a team of skilled joiners are currently working on a birch ply kitchen. "The nice thing about coming to work each day is that everything smells of wood," Rikke says.



Her business has now been in the historic building in Langton Green for two and a half years. "The whole team loves it here. Langton Green is a wonderful location for the business because it is a nice central location with good transport links and close to the docks where the timber merchants import to, but it is also set in lovely countryside and a friendly community. The Hare is fabulous, they do great food, and we had our Christmas lunch there."

The final stop on the tour is the paint room, where traces of the colours of their most recent projects can still be seen. "This colour is from a beautiful green kitchen we did in Langton Green, where we used the Little Green Paint Company's Ambleside colour," Rikke points out. There are also traces of the pink they used for the pretty teenage bedroom I had seen photographs of earlier.

It's time for me to leave, and Rikke's mind is returning to a current project. "We are working on a design for a garden, with seats made out of railway sleepers for a client we first made a kitchen for, and then a wardrobe. Clients keep coming back..." Rikke says with a smile. After meeting this consummate designer in her showroom, it's not hard to see why.

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