

CONTINENTAL CHRISTMAS

Originally from Germany and a trained interior designer, Thorsten van Elten was always going to have a home with European flair

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HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

1970s split-level bungalow

LOCATION East Sussex

ROOMS Kitchen-diner, dining room/sitting room, sunroom, three bedrooms, two bathrooms

PURCHASED 2015

PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'We were living in a flat above Warren Street station in London for 20 years,' says Thorsten.

SITTING ROOM

Hints of Thorsten's experience working in visual retail display can be seen throughout his home, especially at Christmas. 'On cold days we enjoy being in here with the woodburner,' he says.

Varde Samsø woodburner is similar, £1179, Hot Price. Decorative sheep by Hanns-Peter Krafft, from £365 each, Thorsten van Elten





A one-off bungalow, built in the late 1970s, caught the eye of German design enthusiast Thorsten van Elten, much in the same way he chooses stock for his online shop (thorstenvanelten.com) or furnishings for his home.

'For me, design – and my house – should be timeless and uncomplicated and be enjoyed for exactly what it is,' he says. 'The Bauhaus movement has made a big impression on me, but I also like 1970s and 1980s classics. This bungalow in a Sussex village had an unexpected continental look and I knew my furniture would look good in here.'

Thorsten and his partner, Karl Vodrey, were living in London when they decided it was time for a change. They wanted to move to be within easy reach of Channel crossings

for Thorsten to return home to Germany, and to London for Karl's job as a technical services manager. The bungalow had everything they were looking for – a large garden, a barn for storing Thorsten's stock, and, of course, a unique aesthetic.

'Elements of the property are like my brother's home in Germany – painted white brickwork, floor-to-ceiling windows, black window frames,' says Thorsten. 'The layout is split level and that won me over. People talk about making their house their own, but this house already felt like my own, so why change it?'

The couple moved into the bungalow a few days before Christmas seven years ago and Karl's family celebrated the big day with them. 'We decorated with my classic German decorations, a real tree and our familiar furniture, and the house immediately felt like home,' Thorsten recalls.



DINING AREA
Thorsten painted the trio of colour blocks in homage to the Bauhaus movement.

1970s Rosenthal Studio Line chairs by Burkhard Vogtherr, €950 per pair, Design Market, are similar. Cherry large pendant by Daniel Emma, £543, Made in Design. Green-stemmed Römer glasses, £8.95 each, Thorsten van Elten

SITTING ROOM
A glimpse back through the main living space is framed with Swedish artwork from the early 2000s.

Collage Ethno Monster by Muah is similar art (above), €70.95, Klebefieber. Woodgate three-seater sofa in Kvadrat's Hallingdal 65 0600 burnt orange is similar, £4,719, SCP. 1972 Munich Olympics poster (right) by Otl Aicher; try 1stDibs



Thorsten trained in interior design and was a buyer for SCP before opening his own shop. He regularly returns to Germany and visits various Eastern European countries, blending work with pleasure, sourcing design classics for his home and the shop, now online, and which carries his name.

'I look for the right balance of aesthetics in shape and colour and quality is essential,' says Thorsten. 'My Budapest napkins cost 20p each while I invested in Cappellini's Cuba sofa some 20 years ago and it's still going strong.'

Thorsten has sourced vintage artwork – the 1972 Munich Olympics poster is by German designer, Otl Aicher – and quirky cushions inspired by 1960s and 1970s architecture in Berlin U-Bahn stations. He also owns a collection of designer prototypes, such as the yellow

Mechano chair by Andre Klauer and the oversized teacup and saucer planter by Gitta Gschwendtner.

Choosing to upholster his Cappellini sofa in Kvadrat's burnt orange velour was a departure from Thorsten's usual choice for neutrals in large furniture. 'The zingy orange is the right shade to work with the Bauhaus colour blocks I've painted on the wall,' he says.

With Christmas around the corner once again, celebrating remains much the same for the couple, though they like to buy one or two new vintage tree ornaments each year.

'Our German wood decorations are simply made, timeless and much-loved, which is very much how our home feels,' says Thorsten. 'Nothing is over complicated, over-thought, or too precious, we've achieved a really comfortable way to live.'



SUNROOM
An abundance of light comes through the southwest facing windows of the 'wintergarten'.
Homage to the Square rug, £850, by Christopher Farr at The Conran Shop

KITCHEN-DINER
Yellow cabinets create a joyful look.
Silent chair in Yellow is similar, £580, Made In Design

BEDROOM
Colourful furnishings catch the eye against the brilliant white walls.
Similar tiki-style prints, £3.97, South Pacific on Etsy

BATHROOM
The clean lines in the plywood echo the geometrics in the rest of the home.
Restgarn towel, £7, Thorsten van Elten

MAIN BEDROOM
A timber ceiling gives the feel of a cabin. Thorsten's fascination with design is portrayed with framed posters of exhibitions he's attended over the years.
Shadow mirror, €548, Sylvain Willenz

