

RESTLESS LIVING

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VILLA RAUHANNIEMI

Karjalohja, Finland

Built as a vacation home for the designer herself and her family, Villa Rauhaniemi balances minimalist design, coziness, and the peaceful Finnish nature. The Helsinki-based designer, Joanna Laajisto, has been kind to share her experience with designing her own cabin retreat.

“One of the most important design drivers for me was that the house should look and feel like a cabin, not like a residential home. Even though the house is built for all year round living and has all the comforts of a home like dishwasher, washing machine and heat recovery ventilation, all the technical components are carefully hidden”, Joanna says. Finland is known to be the ‘Land of a Hundred Thousand Lakes’, and it is therefore no surprise that Villa Rauhaniemi has taken its opportunity to overlook a calm, forested Finnish lake. Joanna used the notion and responsibility of this precious heritage of the natural landscape to strongly guide the project in terms of sustainability. “I wanted this house to be as small as possible, mostly for ecological reasons but also to prove that with good design you can minimize the number of square meters quite drastically”, Joanna explains. The house has 90 m² of living space including the sauna, 3 relatively small bedrooms and large common living areas in comparison. With the guest cabin, it can in fact accommodate up to 10 people simultaneously. The vacation home is compact but the careful

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layout ensure that the spaces are not cramped together; creating a special feeling. “The feeling is very private and connected to the nature at the same time since it is surrounded by sheltering trees but right on the water. The construction of the house was very carefully planned to conserve the surrounding nature as much as possible. There was no big machinery allowed to the construction site, everything had to be carried to the job site from the parking lot”, Joanna mentions. In addition to the site of Villa Rauhaniemi, Joanna and her family wanted to preserve the surroundings as is: a wild forest. She says: “We also own the adjoining plot but we keep it as a wild forest and as a carbon sink to balance the carbon footprint of the house.” However, the caution to the carbon footprint and sustainable design did not stop there. “All the materials used both interior and exterior are natural without VOC (“Volatile Organic Compounds”, i.e. harmful chemicals in building materials, ed.). The exterior is pine wood with linseed oil. Interior walls and ceilings are painted with clay paint in light putty color. There are also no moldings use in the entire house and every connection detail has been thought out carefully. This calms me down because during my daily work I get so irritated with moldings covering the mistakes of the contractors”, Joanna elaborates. What makes Villa Rauhaniemi truly special is because of this orientation to detail but more importantly the unique bond to family. Joanna concludes: “We first built a small guest cabin to the plot with my dad and stayed there during weekends and holidays for two years, measuring and planning the plot. It was lovely to design something this special for my own family.”

Architecture by **Studio Joanna Laajisto**

Photography by **Mikko Ryhänen**

