

The one thing Stuart Shave wanted when he went in search of a country home was silence. In contrast to a busy life in London split between his home in Hackney and his art gallery near Regent Street, Shave was looking for a place where he could spend weekends and holidays away from everything, with only the landscape and friends for company. With Stable Acre in Norfolk, he has found just the thing.

Here, at the end of a winding farm track set well away from the nearest road or village, Shave

bought a former stable block looking out on an acre of pasture with fields beyond. It was the perfect place to create a home that celebrated the open countryside and big skies, while also forming a backdrop to a carefully assembled collection of mid-century furniture. Stable Acre presented Shave with the opportunity to create the mix of simplicity and sophistication that he was after.

'We all live in this accelerated day-to-day atmosphere, and when I first came here and turned down the track it felt like leaving the world behind and

arriving somewhere different,' says Shave, whose gallery, Modern Art, works closely with such artists as Richard Tuttle, Eva Rothschild and Nigel Cooke. 'I am really drawn to the Norfolk countryside and the house looks over a large pine forest. I see deer in the garden and have a resident owl. It's amazing to me to have this almost cinematic outlook and incredible how much more aware I now feel of the changing seasons and the weather.'

Shave grew up in Suffolk and was familiar with parts of Norfolk, especially the coast. But this

Below When he bought it, Stuart Shave's Norfolk home had already been converted from stables into a house.

He knocked down all but three brick walls and started again, creating a light-filled living and dining area.

The sofa is a 1950s Danish model bought on eBay, and the day bed is by Charlotte Perriand

rural enclave was not part of the county that he knew well until he decided to buy the former stables – a long, single-storey brick building with a pitched roof. The stables had been converted into a house in the early 1990s, with a warren of rooms and a twee set of French windows leading out to the garden. Shave thought he would commission a simple renovation and updating of the building, but was soon tempted by a more ambitious plan to radically reinvent the house, which he shares with his partner, Bart van der Heide,

a curator, as well as Shave's baby daughter, Juno. 'In the beginning I thought we might replace some windows, reclad it and maybe put in some new floorboards,' Shave says. 'But it turned out that we knocked down most of the original house and retained only three brick walls. We scooped the rest out and started again. The original house was completely different to what you see now.'

Shave turned to the architect David Kohn, who had already worked on the design of Shave's gallery, which opened in 2007, as well as extending



A gallery owner's radical stable conversion is both a rural retreat and a showcase for his collection of thoroughbred furniture. By **Dominic Bradbury**. Photographs by **Damian Russell**

Bridle suite



the show space last year. The house represented the chance to continue the collaboration.

'I was really pleased with the gallery design and the dialogue that we had together,' Shave explains. 'That was a key aspect of both the gallery and house projects because I do have my own opinions. When I bought the stables I imagined a home where you could almost walk right through from one end to the other without having any doors, but where you could still create separate spaces.'

Within the remnants of the brick shell of the

stable Kohn designed a home with a large, open-plan living and dining space at the heart of the building, partly arranged around a new fireplace. To one side of this generous, light-filled space sits a modest kitchen and to the other the entrance area, along with a long and open hallway leading right down to the master bedroom at the far end of the house. This bedroom can be separated from the hall with a sliding door and – like all the spaces in the house – savours the views across the countryside. Two guest bedrooms also filter off

from this dramatic corridor, as well as a bathroom with a bespoke concrete bath, designed by Kohn and again positioned to maximise appreciation of the vista.

'The relationship between the house and garden was central to the whole project,' Kohn says. 'The house really acts as a prism to experience the changing light through the day and the shifting seasons. Because the living-room faces south the light is continually changing – every hour is different. It gives the experience of being at the house

Below left the concrete bath, which makes the most of the view outside, is by David Kohn, the architect who designed the entire conversion. **Below right, from top** the oak block stools (in the foreground and to the left) were made by Mike Tuer of Erratics in Yorkshire (erratics.co.uk), and the floor lamp is a 1950s Signal S1833 by Jieldé; Shave working at the dining table, based on a design by Pierre Jeanneret; the living/dining area was built around a new fireplace

a vital character that's both calming and refreshing. I felt the house allowed me to be close to the landscape and that my senses were opened.'

For the interiors, Shave wanted to create spaces that were warm and simple, but that could also form a subtle canvas for a collection of furniture that he assembled over the course of three years from first buying the stables in 2007 to moving in. The beauty of Kohn's architectural detailing mixes with the raw simplicity of the concrete floors and the brick walls and fireplace, painted

white. Along the rear wall of the house, timber panels add a more natural note, while integrated features such as the bookcase in the living-room reinforce the sense of clarity and cohesion.

Shave has an interest in the simple beauty of Shaker design, but was also inspired by the work of the mid-century architect Lina Bo Bardi, whose home in Brazil became a backdrop to her collections of art and furniture. Shave's treasures include a Charlotte Perriand day bed, Jean Prouvé dining chairs, and a desk and chairs designed by



Pierre Jeanneret for the vast 1950s Chandigarh development in India, created by his cousin Le Corbusier. The vast and lovely timber dining table is based on another Jeanneret design. Shave has so enjoyed seeing these pieces settled in the space at last, with space to breathe, that he has yet to decide on which pieces of art he might also bring up to the house. He will take his time.

'I don't think of the house as minimalist because it's not about hiding things away,' Shave says. 'There are very few cupboards here, and for

me many minimalist houses are more about clearing away clutter. But there is definitely a sense of simplicity to Stable Acre.'

The completed house is a true retreat. As Shave doesn't own a car, or want to own one, he uses a bicycle to get around and heads off for walks from the house. When friends come to visit with a car, they sometimes all go to the coast.

'Because it's so remote compared with Hackney, days do take on a different kind of emphasis here,' Shave says. 'Preparing a meal is something that

might take us a lot longer here and is always much the better for it. Most of our food is bought from farm shops that we can cycle to or from people who sell produce at the side of the lane. I would say that being up at the house is pretty much about the simple things of life: sleeping, walking, cooking. It's just that you have the opportunity to be so much more mindful about it.'

Modern Art: 020-7299 7950; modernart.net.

David Kohn Architects: 020-7424 8596;

davidkohn.co.uk

Stuart Shave's home truths

My favourite pieces of furniture in the house are the Pierre Jeanneret 1950s chairs from Chandigarh in India.

If I could buy any piece of furniture

it would be the Mexique bookshelf from 1953 by Charlotte Perriand. But it's so overpriced that I don't think I ever will.

The Japanese architectural practice

Sanaa is another big influence on the way I think about design, especially the interiors of their domestic spaces. Brazilian architect Lina Bo Bardi is another influence, as well as Caruso St John and of course David Kohn.

The living-room window is my favourite place in the house. It makes a cinematic frame of the outside and its elements.

My favourite artist is my friend Richard Tuttle. He creates humble-scale works but with an epic visibility.

The best house I've ever visited is the Rachofsky House by Richard Meier in Dallas. It's a perfect example of how an incredible art collection can co-exist with and complement architecture.

My favourite era of design is the 1950s, especially French designers such as Jean Prouvé, Perriand and Jeanneret.

If I could live anywhere in the world it would be the coast of north Cornwall – but I am happy enough where I am in Norfolk.

My favourite furniture gallery is Galerie Patrick Seguin in Paris (00 331 47 00 32 35; patrickseguin.com).



Top the card table and cinema chairs in the kitchen table were designed by Pierre Jeanneret for the Chandigarh development in India. The oak dresser is by Mike Tuer of Erratics in Yorkshire.

Middle the library shelves were built by the architect David Kohn, while the desk is by Jeanneret and the chair is by Jean Prouvé. **Bottom** the storage units and bed were made from reclaimed timber by Jona Warbey (jonawarbey.com)