

# Arne Jacobsen's Own House

Strandvejen 413

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Realdania By & Byg

## **ARNE JACOBSEN**

Architect and Designer

Professor at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen (1956-1965).

He was born on 11 February 1902 in Copenhagen.

His father, Johan Jacobsen was a wholesaler.

His mother, Pouline Jacobsen worked in a bank.

He graduated from Copenhagen Technical School in 1924.

Attended the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture in Copenhagen (1924-1927)

He worked at the Copenhagen City Architect's office (1927-1929)

From 1930 until his death in 1971, he ran his own practice.

## **JACK OF ALL TRADES**

A total one of a kind, Arne Jacobsen was world famous. For more than half a century, due to his myriad of diverse projects, ranging from architecture to furniture and utility items, he made a powerful and personal mark on Danish architecture and design. His range was huge: from the Functionalist lines of his major buildings to the simplicity of his famous range of cutlery. One particular hallmark of his work is the fact that several of his buildings, right down to the most minute detail, featured furnishings and fittings that he had designed himself.

His major projects in the field of architecture include:

Bellavista in Klampenborg (1933-1934)

Bellevue Theatre (1935-1936)

Aarhus City Hall (in collaboration with Erik Møller) (1939-1942)

Søllerød Town Hall (in collaboration with Flemming Lassen) (1940-1942)

The Søholm terraced house development in Klampenborg (1949-1954)

Rødovre Town Hall (1957)

Glostrup Town Hall (1958-1960)

Munkegård School in Gentofte (1955-1959)

SAS Royal Hotel, Copenhagen (1958-1960)

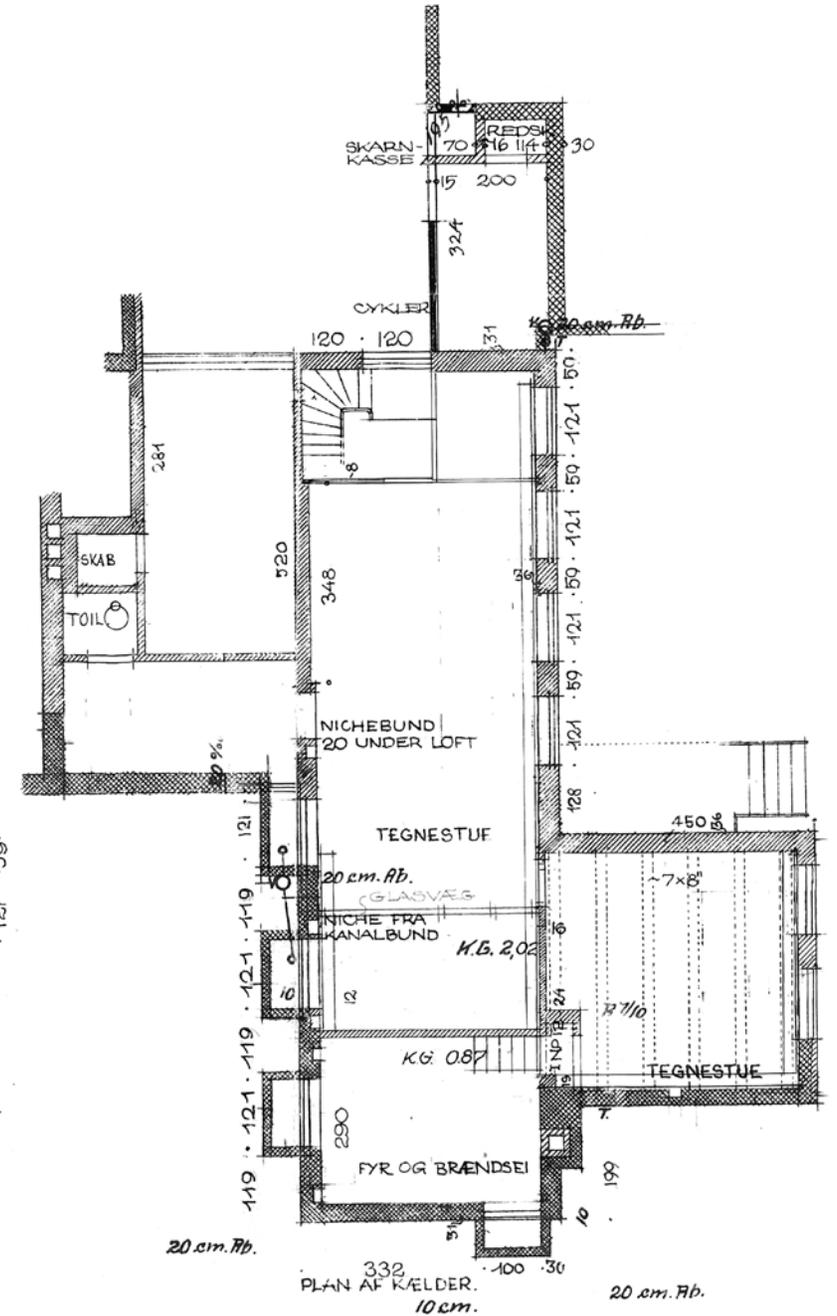
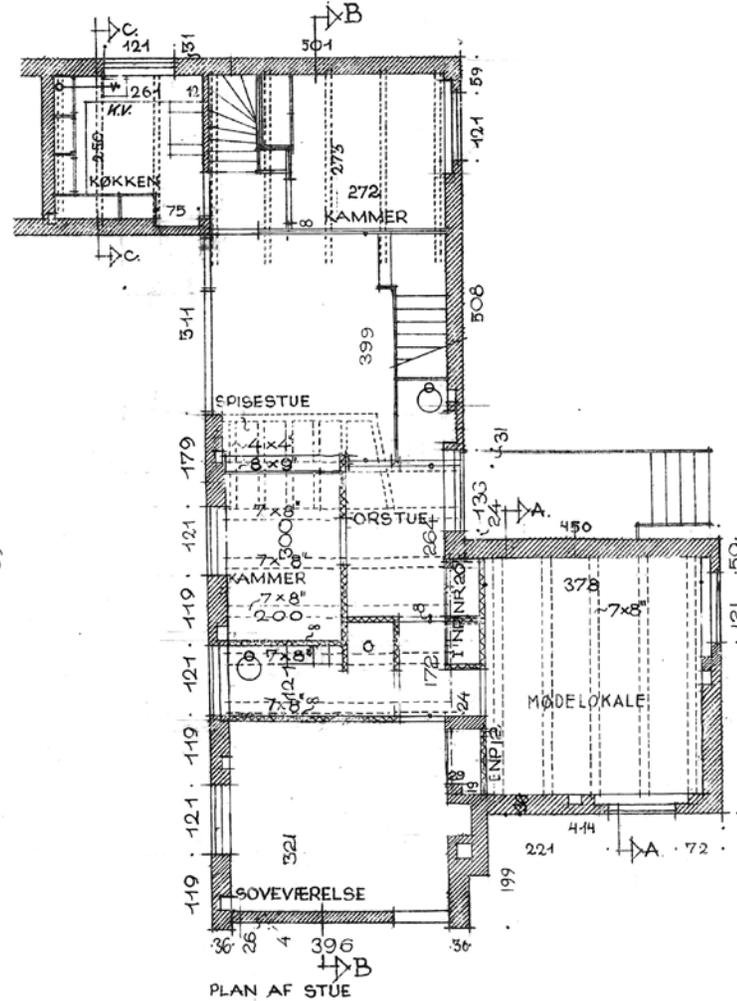
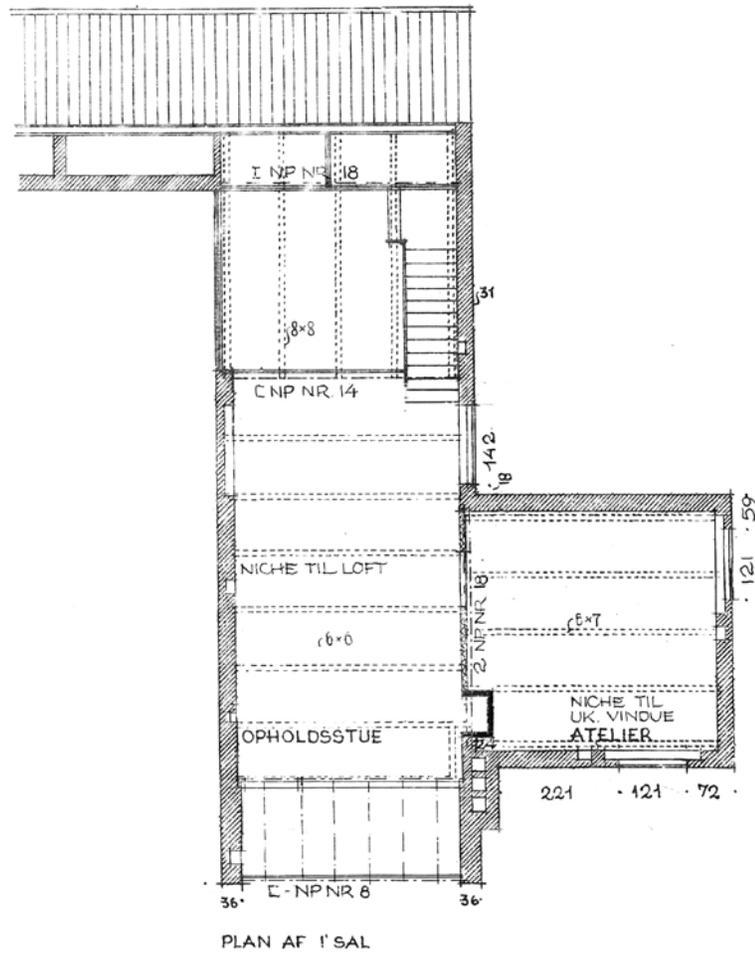
Tom's Chocolate Factory in Ballerup (1961)

The National Bank of Denmark (commenced in 1965)

St Catherine's College, Oxford (1964-1966)

## GROUND PLAN OF THE HOUSE

Arne Jacobsen's original floor plans of the 1st floor, ground floor and basement, incl. bicycle shed and garage. The plot is 720 m<sup>2</sup>, while the overall built-up area is 131 m<sup>2</sup>. The total living space is 130 m<sup>2</sup>. The practice comprises 124 m<sup>2</sup> including the studio on the 1st floor.



# Foreword

In 2005, after acquiring the Danish architect Arne Jacobsen's own house at Strandvejen 413 in Klampenborg, north of Copenhagen, Realdania By & Byg carried out a thorough restoration. Subsequently, the house, built in 1951, was rented out. The tenants did an impressive job of injecting life into this listed property and put the combined house/architecture practice to good use.

In spring 2019, the house was empty, and Realdania By & Byg carried out yet another restoration. This was based on an exhaustive colour-archaeological study and a recovered drawing, which showed in meticulous detail Arne Jacobsen's original intentions for the décor of the kitchen in the terraced house.

The house now has a new kitchen, the style and décor of which are based on the original kitchen design, and the colours of the walls, ceilings and woodwork were inspired by the original colours. To mark the occasion of this recent restoration, we are re-publishing this little book about the house on Strandvejen with new illustrations and text. In the book, the art historian/Associate Professor Martin Søberg and the architect/professor Peter Thule Kristensen provide an insight into all the factors that went into the creation of this masterpiece of architecture and cultural history: the zeitgeist of the early 1950s; the entire Søholm development; the décor and details of the house; the garden; and – especially – its creator, the world-famous Danish architect, Arne Jacobsen.

The terraced house was constructed as a combination of private dwelling and architecture practice, and Arne Jacobsen lived and worked in the house until his death in 1971. The house is an end-of-terrace house in the Søholm I development, built between 1949 and 1954 along with Søholm II and III. The project was completed in three phases, each featuring its own type of house, all in accordance with Jacobsen's design. It was Søholm I that led to Arne Jacobsen's international breakthrough. Together with Bellevue Theatre, Bellavista, the Skovshoved petrol station and the Ved Bellevue Bugt residential complex, the entire Søholm development reflects 30 years of Arne Jacobsen's work. Both the terraced house and the garden were listed in 1987.

Realdania By & Byg  
April 2020



# The Era

## – A Perpetual Balance Between Rationality and Sophistication

Martin Søberg, an art historian and Associate Professor of Architectural History, provides an insight into the trends that characterised the era and the zeitgeist, when Arne Jacobsen built his house on Strandvejen in 1951.

For centuries, Dyrehaven (the Deer Park) on the shore of the Øresund strait, north of Copenhagen (in English, best-known as ‘The Sound’), has lured city dwellers from the narrow streets of the city with the promise of light and fresh air, health and recreation. Even today, the royal hunting park is an impressive sight with its ancient, gnarled oaks and herds of deer. The water in the Kirsten Piil natural spring was renowned for its healing properties and led to the establishment of a summer marketplace with tents and small booths. It was to become known as ‘Dyrehavsbakken’ (Deer Park Hill), the oldest amusement park in the world.

1845 saw the construction of the Klampenborg Swimming Baths, designed by the architect, M.G. Bindesbøll. The facility consisted of small buildings, so-called English-style cottages, so it became known as ‘Cottage Park’. Here, the people of Copenhagen could enjoy the wholesome provisions in a picturesque setting, shaded by beech trees and with views of the sea.

The idolisation of nature as an expression of purity and authenticity, in contrast to the fatiguing and depraved artificiality of civilisation, seriously took off during the 18th century. The age was coloured by a wave of Romanticism, led by the Swiss philosopher of the Enlightenment, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He persuaded the European aristocracy and upper middle classes to construct country houses with picturesque gardens at an appropriate distance from the ever-growing metropolises.

The country house was a villa suburbana, an Italian concept dating back to ancient Rome. The country house provided space for a freer, simpler, yet luxurious way of life in the summer countryside, though always with easy access to the city.

In or around 1800, the architect Joseph Ramée, a French immigrant, designed the country houses of Øregaard and Sophienholm, which have survived to this day. The architect, C.F. Hansen also designed several of them, while the painter, Nicolai Abildgaard built his own country house, Spurveskjul at Frederiksdal, north of Copenhagen. With its modest, yet classically serene architectural appearance, the house was to have major significance for architects in the early 20th century, including Arne Jacobsen.

Gradually, these scattered detached houses evolved into actual residential districts, which, starting in the late 19th century, extended in the form of suburbs into the extremely attractive, hilly and coastal landscape north of Copenhagen. It was here, in the natural setting of Klampenborg, that Arne Jacobsen played in the summer as a child, when his Copenhagen merchant family fancied a respite from the city. He later chose the same place for the site of the national museum, which he designed in 1928 as a gold-medal project at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. Then, in addition to the Bellevue neighbourhood and his own home in the Søholm development, he designed more detached houses specifically for this area: with the Deer Park as a backdrop and the Sound on the doorstep.

## **TOWARDS A NEW SOCIETY**

Jacobsen designed Søholm in the latter half of the 1940s, and the development was completed in 1951. During the war, construction in Denmark had come to a standstill, partly because of the difficulty of obtaining materials. Iron in particular was in short supply, so modern building techniques involving the use of reinforced concrete were replaced by more traditional techniques and materials such as wood and bricks that were available domestically.

The restrictions on materials continued after the war, stamping their mark on architecture, which united traditional forms such as saddle roofs and brick walls with modern considerations of functionality and practical décor. The housing



Søholm I consists of five terraced houses. The interlacing of the houses, and the way in which they are staggered, lends the row of houses an ornamental character.

shortage was nothing new, but had been exacerbated by the lack of construction during the war. So, the government estimated that 30,000 homes must be erected every year until 1950 to accommodate the demand.

Since 1938, the state had supported the construction of small, affordable housing on the basis of affordable loans, as long as a house was less than 110 m<sup>2</sup> and involved the use of local building materials. Søholm too benefited from this scheme. There was an intensive growth of urban suburbs, based on new urban planning principles. Copenhagen, for example, witnessed the famous 'Finger Plan' of 1947, which involved the expansion of the city in tandem with the S-train commuter railway lines, extending like fingers from the city centre.

Denmark was evolving from an agricultural society into an industrial society, as a result of which many people were relocating to the cities. Public benefits were introduced. It was the start of the modern welfare society, governed by a strong



state and progressive politics. The construction of housing was regarded as a key factor in this major development of society and in the improvement of people's living conditions. This also led to the establishment of the Ministry of Housing and the Danish Building Research Institute in 1947.

In and around 1950, the major housing associations commissioned extensive developments, often located in an open, green setting, and reflecting the same ideals of light, air and recreational opportunities that had led to the construction of the country houses north of Copenhagen in or around 1800.

Arne Jacobsen and his wife  
Jonna in the garden, probably  
in the 1960s.

## **NATURE AND STRUCTURE**

During the final two years of World War II, Arne Jacobsen had lived as an exile in Sweden. Here, he designed a number of patterns for fabric prints and wallpapers, based on studies of nature: for example, the reproduction of a forest floor or of specific plants in varying degrees of abstraction. His wife Jonna, a trained fabric printer, served as an expert, professional sounding board. The patterns were very popular and were sold in both Sweden and Denmark.

Back in Denmark, Jacobsen's work was affected by the general shortage of material, and his work of the 1940s and early 1950s also featured more traditional forms of architecture. But not without a twist. Saddle roofs were stretched and folded, and brick walls were interrupted by large windows, panels and indentations.

Arne Jacobsen worked not only on several major housing projects, but also on several school buildings, usually constructed in yellow brick and located in scenic environments, taking into account the shape of the sites, existing greenery and sight lines. This consideration invests the buildings with a poetic touch, which seems to have evolved from his studies of nature for fabric patterns, despite the fact that we also sense a recurrent interest in simplification and the structures that nature also affords.

During the war, the principles of rational thinking about order and unity, which tended to characterise international modern architecture in the 1930s, had reared its ugly head. Now a romantic sentiment emerged: once again, nature and human-kind should take precedence over technology and systems.

However, rationality too featured in the work of many architects, as they standardised and streamlined building to cater for the huge demand for housing and the lack of skilled craftsmen. As is crystal clear in Arne Jacobsen's work, love of nature and principles of technical refinement were not necessarily in conflict, but rather two aspects of a world view, in which general and specific are in mutual balance.



# The Development

## – A Sophisticated Synthesis of Architecture and Sense of Place

Peter Thule Kristensen, an architect and professor, turns his attention away from Arne Jacobsen's own house and looks at the entire Søholm development, of which the terraced house is part.

Between The Bay of Bellevue and the Coastal Railway Line there are a group of building complexes that have unparalleled status in the history of 20th-century architecture. They were designed by the architect Arne Jacobsen over the course of a thirty-year period. Each one provides an excellent reflection of various stages in the evolution of modern architecture.

In so many ways, Arne Jacobsen's White Town, featuring the Bellavista residential complex, the Bellevue Theatre and the Bellevue Beach bathing facilities, is an emblem of Danish Functionalism. For many Copenhageners, these complexes fuse memories of summers spent on the beach and walks in the Deer Park with 1930s' functionalism: a unique amalgam of ice cream cones, tall trees, reflections of light from the sea and Functionalism's fascination with machines.

Later, other developments became a natural addition to the complex. After World War II, Jacobsen designed the linked/terraced-house complex, Søholm, which also contained his own house. Completed at the start of the 1950s, Søholm rounded off Jacobsen's Bellevue district at the southern end. With its open spaces facing the Sound and its countless diagonals affording views of the sea, this residential development is as a kind of reinterpretation of Bellavista. However, the split-level pitched roofs and yellow brick walls of Søholm are also an expression of an approach to Modernism, which, far more than the white Functionalism of Bellavista, drew on local Danish building traditions.



In 1961, Jacobsen built the capstone of the whole project: the Ved Bellevue Bugt residential complex. It consists of an elongated block of flats parallel to the coastal railway line and four low atrium buildings facing the Sound.

This complex closed the ‘gap’ between Bellavista and Søholm. With its more anonymous façades, it comes across as a neutral link between the two more intricate complexes. Thus, the three residential complexes, Bellavista, Søholm and Ved Bellevue Bugt make up a carefully calculated cohesion, in which the views of the Sound constitute the leitmotif.

While the main focus of this book is Arne Jacobsen’s own house in the Søholm complex, that house cannot be regarded in isolation. As has been suggested, the environment and particularly the location on the shore of the Sound are crucial when it comes to understanding the house. Whereas, to a certain extent, we can regard Jacobsen’s first residence, the Functionalist villa on Gotfred Rodes Vej

Søholm I, II and III were built between 1949 and 1954 and consist of both terraced houses and linked houses. Together with the entire Bellevue complex, the Skovshoved petrol station and the Ved Bellevue Bugt residential complex, they reflect 30 years of Jacobsen’s work.



In Søholm I, Arne Jacobsen achieved a sophisticated fusion of modern idiom and location: sharp-cut, geometric buildings constructed in yellow brick with mortar of beach sand, granite and old trees.

(1928-29), as an isolated structure, that is impossible when it comes to Søholm. In this context, above all, Jacobsen's house is part of a complex composition: an uncommonly sophisticated interaction of architecture and location.

### **SUN, SOUND AND TREES**

The Søholm complex is sandwiched between the Coastal Railway Line and Strandvejen, on one side, and Slotsalléen on the other, on a large plot, on which a mansion, Søholm once stood. The complex was constructed in three stages: Søholm I, dating from 1951, which contains five linked houses, including Jacobsen's own house; Søholm II, also from 1951, which consists of nine terraced houses, positioned in parallel with the Coastal Railway Line; and finally, Søholm III, from 1954, which was designed in the form of four staggered, terraced houses on a single level so as not to impede the view from the other houses. Out of consideration for the surrounding residential development, the entire Søholm development is considerably lower in height and less dense than Bellavista.

Taking a closer look at Søholm I-III, we see that the interrelationship and staggered layout of the houses are the result of an equation, in which orientation in relation to the sun, the view of the Sound and some large trees from the original grounds were key factors. Together, the three built sections form a large scenic space, a kind of open plaza, which opens up towards the Sound. It is partly as a result of this opening and the angling of the individual houses in Søholm I and III that all the houses have a view of the Sound.

Accordingly, the garden façades of sections I and II face southeast: a compromise between good orientation vis-à-vis the sun and view.

In Søholm II, the terraced houses are also divided into two sections out of consideration for a group of elegant old plane trees. On the Sound side, the open plaza is also flanked by three more old trees, two of which stand in Arne Jacobsen's own front garden. Viewed from within the complex, these trees come across as pieces of scenery, highlighting the foreground as if in a classical landscape painting with the Sound as the backdrop.

The gentle incline of the plot towards the Sound and the low shrubbery also play a role in terms of underscoring this view. Arne Jacobsen virtuosically fused a picturesque ideal of beauty with a Functionalist ideal of orientation in relation to the sun and repetition of building types.

## **INTERLACEMENT**

The five linked houses in Søholm I, of which Jacobsen's own was the closest to Strandvejen, are the most intricate in the complex. The distinctive feature of each house is its pitched, split-level roof, reflecting the staggered position of the houses on the plot. Part of the pitched roof continues over onto an intermediate building, which connects the houses. The intermediate building and the interaction between floor plan and façade visually interlace the five linked houses to form a kind of three-dimensional ornament – a meander pattern in brick and grey fibre cement. At the same time, each individual house has its own distinctive character, by virtue of the striking shape of the roof, the chimney and a handful of square window cavities.

The townhouses are one cohesive composition, which allows each house to emerge as an independent unit, highlighted by the chimney, the square windows and the incline of the roof.



"The houses are constructed of soft yellow bricks, which will quickly weather and turn grey. The parapets and balconies are yellow, while the rest of the woodwork is white, although the recessed wooden sections are painted grey to harmonise with the yellowish-grey bricks, the granite walls, the willow hedges and the dark grey, fibre-cement-board roof."

*Arne Jacobsen in  
Arkitekten [1951]*



As a result of these elements, each house comes across as a mask or a face, looking out over the Sound. The linked houses thus teeter between being individual structures and forming part of an interlaced entity. What we see is a whole range of interesting architectural ambiguities, further underpinned by the fact that the long side of each house comes across as an end wall. Fascinatingly, we are left wondering where the front of the house is, and where each house starts or ends.

Søholm I would herald Arne Jacobsen's international breakthrough. He lived in the house from 1951 until his death in 1971.

Again, the composition is not motivated merely by aesthetic considerations. The split-level roof provides space for a high-lying ribbon window, which serves to draw soft northern light into the house, while, like a shadow cast by the peak of a cap, the roof slopes down toward the more intense southern light on the garden side. In each of the houses, the staggering effect also creates a small, intimate patio in the garden area and a small front yard facing the road. At an angle, the latter shields the approach to the front door in the east end wall and to a garage in the basement.

Jacobsen's end-of-terrace house is fundamentally identical to the four other houses. The extension was built at the same time as the house, but did not appear in

the initial drawings. When it appeared, it was part of the drafting room – on all floors. When the area restriction, which came with cheap government loans for construction, was extended from 110 m<sup>2</sup> to 130 m<sup>2</sup>, the meeting room was converted into a bedroom.

## **MATERIALITY**

Just as the houses relate to their surroundings in their exterior, the materials also reflect an exhaustive study of colour schemes and the effects of texture on the site.

For Jacobsen, aligning the materials with one another and considering how they would weather together were a major priority. They are also a perfect match for the sandy beach, the large trees and the granite shelters along Strandvejen. So, the houses do not come across as isolated objects, but seem to emerge gradually from their surroundings. A granite wall surrounds the ground around Jacobsen's house. Then, concentrically, comes a willow fence, a bush or a hedge, and ultimately the greyish-yellow walls of the house, rising up between a couple of old trees. Everything possesses a rough materiality and colour scheme, reflecting those of the surrounding nature.

Such materiality is a major departure from Functionalism's ideal architecture, consisting of white-plastered, geometrically well-defined built structures. Instead, Søholm perpetuates a post-war architectural trend, which cultivated more traditional, artisanal brick building. In Denmark, it was the architect Kay Fisker who launched this trend. He referred to it as "the functional tradition", often citing P.V. Jensen Klint, the architect of Grundtvig Church in Copenhagen, as an important source of inspiration.

With its yellow bricks and its crystalline shapes, the Søholm complex reiterates some of the same themes that feature in Klint's Grundtvig Church. Ultimately, the fascination with rough natural materials owes a debt to Romanticism – as, conversely, does the pure abstraction too. Søholm apparently features both aspects.



# The House

## – A Well-Conceived Interior with a Great Sense of Space and Detail

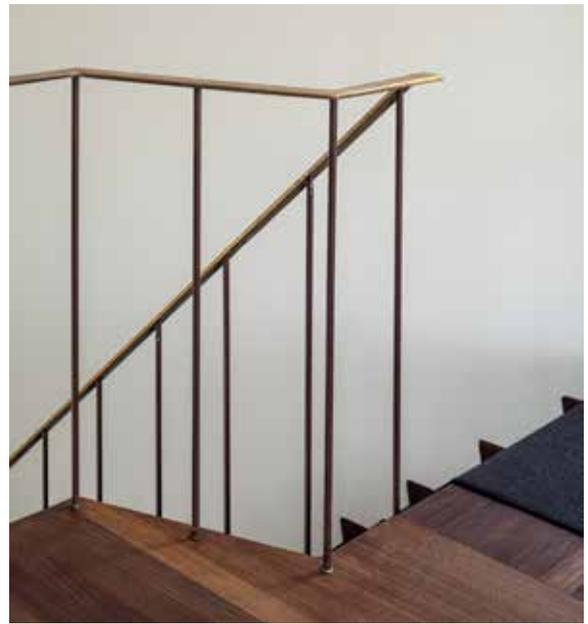
Peter Thule Kristensen, an architect and professor, goes through Jacobsen's own house room by room, revealing an interior that is both modern and contextually aware.

The extensive use of staggered spaces and the fact that the house faces in various directions is also reflected in the interior of Arne Jacobsen's own house, which, despite its modest 130 m<sup>2</sup> (not counting the studio/workspace), comes across as very spacious. We also get the sense that much thought went into how the individual rooms relate to the surroundings and to each other.

As previously mentioned, Jacobsen's end-of-terrace house is somewhat larger than the others. However, like the other houses, it consists of the same principal element: an elongated, narrow structure crowned by a split-level pitched roof. This roof covers both a double-height dining room on the ground floor and a living room on the first floor. These two rooms are interconnected spatially by an elegant staircase and an open balcony: an architectural statement, which Arne Jacobsen had also used 14 years previously in his holiday cottage at Gudmindrup in Odsherred.

In the house on Strandvejen, despite their limited floor area, both rooms seem surprisingly spacious. They both benefit from pitched ceilings that culminate right above the edge of the balcony in a commanding ribbon window.

However, the rooms also have various properties. The living room enjoys a relatively secluded position with a view of the Sound through a large glass window



that occupies the room's entire width. Meanwhile, the dining room is the house's central thoroughfare and only has direct contact with an enclosed outdoor patio in the garden. It is not until we arrive at the end wall of the living room, which extends into an outdoor balcony, that we encounter the house's only extensive panoramic view of the Sound – the finale to our progress through the house.

The solution of a double-height room connected to another room on a balcony is a familiar Modernist concept, the first prime example of which was in Le Corbusier's Pavillon d'Esprit Nouveau (1925). However, what makes Søholm so special is the fact that the exterior contour of the house is in such meticulous harmony with its internal transitions and different types of spaces.

The other rooms in the house are clearly subservient to the dining room and living room. On one side of the dining room is the hallway and – facing the garden – the family's three bedrooms. On the other side of the dining room, there is the domestic area, with the kitchen, a staircase leading down to the garage and the basement, which was designed for business, housing Jacobsen's drafting room and a maid's room. But Jacobsen did not have a maid living in his house. Instead,

Arne Jacobsen's sense for sophisticated finishes and transition is in evidence throughout the house.





the room served as a room for Jonna's daughter and later as the office of Jacobsen's secretary.

Access to the drafting room was from outside via a separate entrance door next to the garage. The construction of the aforementioned extension on the east-facing end wall (a feature unique to Jacobsen's house) created three additional rooms, one on each of the three floors: the drafting room in the basement; a meeting room on the ground floor; and a studio on the first floor.

In contrast to the dining room and the living room, the other rooms have smaller, square windows, which frame only a restricted part of the view and often relate to a particular space in the surrounding garden. Consequently, there is a clearly legible hierarchy among the house's different rooms and apertures: a hierarchy that is generally related quite precisely to the various spaces in the garden.

Similarly, the detail of the individual rooms helps underscore the hierarchy. For example, the numerous built-in shelves and cabinets in the office and bedrooms are all painted white and are utilitarian in appearance; while the two built-in

The living room of the house and adjoining studio with square windows provided an elegantly framed view of the Sound.



"In the summer, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of people drove past to see the complex, and just as many people have expressed their opinion of the new houses on the Søholm site in Klampenborg [...]. The architect Arne Jacobsen has kindled huge interest, not just among Denmark's architects, but far beyond the country's borders, where trade magazines in England, Switzerland and Sweden have carried articles about the Søholm Houses. The forthcoming issues of the leading architectural periodicals, *Art and Architecture* [USA], *Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* [Paris] have carefully covered the ground plan, the design and the individual house."

*Berlingske Tidende, 19 October 1951.*

When determining the position of the houses and their interrelationship, the Sound and the sun were decisive factors.

sideboards in the dining room and the studio on the first floor were meticulously constructed in Oregon pine.

However, the windows feature mahogany glazing beads, lending them a touch of crispness and sophistication. At important transitional points, some of the architectural elements sometimes come across as sculptures in their own right: for example, the fireplace and adjacent plant trough (a typical Jacobsen feature) next to the living room window or the staircase between the living room and the dining room. Jacobsen's detailing is never domineering, but always carefully adapted to the situation.

### **WHAT IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT SØHOLM?**

It is fascinating to observe how, in Søholm, Jacobsen so successfully interwove a number of themes into an intricately complex, yet harmonious entity. The individual themes never seem to take over. Each of the linked houses is thus allowed to emerge as an individual structure, while at the same time remaining part of the chain, in which not one of the house's sides unequivocally comes across as the main façade.



Photo of the living room while Arne Jacobsen was living in the house. The fixtures and furnishings in the home changed as his own designs evolved: for example, the Egg chair and his famous door handle.

The view of the Sound plays a prominent role, yet is only really exposed in the living room. The rest of the house reveals only small sections of the sea view through precisely-placed square windows. This is not hackneyed panorama architecture but architecture that very precisely orchestrates its effects. The site's other distinctive characteristics are also woven into the architecture by retaining old trees, which play a major role in the composition, and by using materials, which mirror certain textural effects and subtleties of colour characteristic of the location.

However, this does not mean that there is anything anonymous or traditional about the houses. On the contrary, the clear-cut expression and the repetition only serve to add a modern touch: a contrast that actually encourages us to take a fresh look at the place, to rediscover the gnarled beauty of the trees, the wide horizon and the light.

As the architect Kjeld Vindum has explained, the Søholm development was to herald Jacobsen's international breakthrough. Of course, the history of architecture had seen similar pitched roofs, but the composition of pitched roof, chimney and double-height dining room was innovative and justified the attention that the complex kindled, when it was completed in 1951. The development also broke with both Functionalism's predilection for geometrically-clear-cut structures and the regional, saddle-roof hallmark of the 'functional tradition'.

In other words, Søholm was an important work vis-à-vis Jacobsen's development as an architect: clearly in evidence in the three building complexes on Strandvejen: Bellavista, Søholm and Ved Bellevue Strand. Each of them, at the time it was created, represented everything that was new in architecture, but what they all have in common is a constant theme: a theme related to a body's experience or sensory perception of the location – the view of the sea, the orientation towards the sun and the movement through various rooms inextricably linked to the surrounding landscape.

Jacobsen's architecture is at once modern and contextually aware.



# The Garden

## – A Botanical Masterpiece in the Field of Landscape Gardening

Arne Jacobsen's passionate interest in garden design and botany is also prominent at Strandvejen 413. The house and the garden are a single, cohesive project, reiterating and mirroring each other.

Throughout his life, Arne Jacobsen was passionately interested in botany. This found expression not only in the areas around his buildings, which were often landscaped with great artistic flair, but also in many of his other projects such as wall-papers and fabrics, in which garden motifs were a favourite and frequent feature.

The small, listed garden around the house at Strandvejen 413 is noticeably different from Arne Jacobsen's other gardens, and is considered one of his masterpieces of landscape gardening. While, in line with the principles of Functionalism, Jacobsen usually created relatively simple garden layouts around his detached houses, replete with a lawn, a few trees and only a handful of plants for the homeowner to look after, his own garden was a densely packed, exotic oasis. The plot's meagre 300 m<sup>2</sup> was meticulously planned by Jacobsen himself, and contained a myriad of plants – originally more than 300.

The sloping garden area was divided into several smaller garden plots, separated by thin larch hedges of varying heights. Taking a closer look at the garden's layout (see the book's flap), we notice that the tiled area of the garden was designed to reiterate the dramatic lines of the house. Bearing this in mind, it is obvious that the layout was not conceived merely as an appendix to the building, but as a natural extension of it. The garden and the building are one cohesive work, repeating and reflecting one another.



Like the garden's paths, a large portion of the garden is paved with grey sandstone tiles. Together with the fencing on the Sound side, this paving invests the garden with a patio effect. Another effect of the fencing on the Sound side is the fact that there is no single view of the Sound. This would deflect the viewer's attention from the garden. Instead, several small peepholes emerge, each of which offers a glimpse of the sea, as we stroll around the oasis. The arrangement of the garden also results in fragmented sequences that kindle curiosity. Together with the various heights of the plants, this arrangement constantly gives rise to new sensations for anyone taking a stroll through the lush garden.

The house at Strandvejen 413 was listed in 1987. Realdania By & Byg acquired the house in 2005.

The numerous garden spaces contain a selection of exquisite plants, arranged with great botanical knowledge and artistic vision. The plants were carefully selected according to the colour, form and texture of the foliage. The vast majority of the plants are green and devoid of colourful flowers: for example, ferns and bamboo, of which there are many and numerous varieties in the garden. Any visual effects result from the interplay and contrast between differently-shaped leaves and different colours of foliage, the alternation between lush plants and manicured vegetation. The few flowers there are serve to add a touch of brightness against the



Snippets of Arne Jacobsen's most famous buildings sneaked in and made their mark throughout the garden. For example, the concrete wall behind his drawing board is clad with the same mosaic tiles as those on the façades of the Toms Chocolate factories, which he designed in 1961. In several places there are elements reminiscent of columns with grooves and small cavities for flowers to climb up. The same feature is evident in the 'Arne Jacobsen Garden' at the National Bank of Denmark. The garden thoroughfares are clad with large Porsgrunn marble tiles, also used for façade cladding on the likes of Aarhus City Hall and Rødovre Town Hall, which Arne Jacobsen designed in 1942 and 1957.

In Arne Jacobsen's drawing board in the garden, there is a small recess, so his pens would not fall on the ground.

backdrop of the green tableaux. The garden was planned to provide a variety of experiences from February to December. January was the only month in which no gardening was required.

The garden contains a few trees left over from the grounds of the mansion, Søholm, which was originally situated on the site. Otherwise, there are no big trees in the garden. Instead, manicured bamboo plants serve as fences at the bottom of the garden. Several plants – including *Euonymus minimus*, whose leaves resemble angel tears – are left to grow over the garden paths. This helps ensure that there are no sharp lines of demarcation between paths and flowerbeds. Nonetheless, the garden possesses a very special tranquillity, which we can enjoy from several places in the house, including the living room on the 1st floor.

In one of the garden's sunlit spaces, Arne Jacobsen set up a permanent workspace for himself, where he often sat and worked. Consequently, the garden at Strandvejen 413 was to play a dual role for Jacobsen. It was both a culmination of, and inspiration for Jacobsen's work, especially for his myriad of watercolours, and wallpaper and fabric designs.



# The Architect

## – A Complex Human Being: Artistic, Pragmatic and Vigorous

Martin Søbørg, an art historian and Associate Professor of Architectural History, casts a spotlight on Arne Jacobsen the architect who, in his quest for aesthetic harmony, was driven by simplification and good proportion.

Following its completion in 1951, the Søholm development received extensive coverage in countless periodicals and newspapers, often illustrated with photos of Arne Jacobsen's own home. The photos provide an excellent impression of his housing ideals and notions of how the houses should be used. In addition to drawings and photographs of the exterior of the houses, there are photos of the living room and dining area, and several of the staircase. We sense that what makes the architecture so special is this central spatial sequence, while the more modest, private rooms such as the kitchen, basement, bedrooms and bathrooms, are not featured.

The furnishing emphasises the particular situation of each room. The dining area is a hub for movement around the house, so a round dining table accentuates that function. In the living room, the sofa is positioned with its back to the staircase and the house's other activities, providing as it were a soft bench from which to take in the panoramic view of the Sound. Furniture and lamps are modern; only a handful of decorative antiques supplement the clean lines. Above the fireplace, in horizontal lines, there are casts of cameos by the neoclassical sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen, while a picture by the Swiss architect Le Corbusier adds a touch of contemporary art. The sense of space is light and airy; all objects seem to be of exquisite quality.



The correlation between outside and inside is not confined to the many glazed sections. The plant trough next to the fireplace housed a small family of round cacti of varying sizes, and over time other plants too – for example orchids and succulents – and one of the walls in the dining area boasts botanical cactus illustrations. Colourful Swedish rugs and small vases of flowers contributed to the impression of restrained lushness. At a later point, Ant chairs, designed by Jacobsen in 1952, were used round the dining table. As in most other homes, the décor and colours of the walls were periodically changed throughout the many years the Jacobsen family lived in the house: for example, new door handles, lamps etc., designed by Arne Jacobsen himself.

Colour-archaeological studies recently revealed that several walls were originally painted in saturated colours, but seldom was an entire room painted in the same colour. Instead, Arne Jacobsen accentuated the architecture as a composite of large flat surfaces. The colours have now been reconstructed and contribute to the sense of spatial variation. The wall under the staircase is a cool jade green, in

The balcony of the house is an extension of the living room space. The living room is located on the first floor of the house, affording a wonderful view, not only of the Sound, but also of the garden.

Plants, especially cacti, were Arne Jacobsen's passion. Allegedly, he once said that if he were ever reincarnated, he wished to return as a gardener. Over the years, the plant trough next to the fireplace contained succulents, cacti and orchids. The same plants can also be seen in buildings such as the SAS Royal Hotel and the National Bank. It was from nature that Arne Jacobsen drew inspiration for both wallpaper and design products.



The display cabinet in the dining room and the radio and speaker cabinet in the studio are both made of Oregon pine. The other cabinets in the house are painted pine. Arne Jacobsen designed all the cabinets specifically for this house.

balanced contrast to the glowing Oregon pine of the built-in cabinet and the dark Wenge of the staircase. There is a similar green in the drafting room in the basement. Two yellow walls draw in the morning sun in the studio on the 1st floor, while in the little room near the kitchen we encounter a fresh moss green.

## BEAUTY AS A DRIVING FORCE

Arne Jacobsen's architectural firm was relatively modest in size. In the post-war period, he had fewer than ten employees. The mood was patriarchal. No one was in any doubt as to who the boss and artistic director was. Jacobsen was also popular with his staff, even though, in periods of excessive overtime, they might feel exploited and considered the hourly rate was on the low side.

Architectural competitions were a continual way of winning new assignments, so this must have contributed to the feeling of working in a pressured, yet highly creative environment. The initial drafting and detailed studies of the construction

programme were usually left to the employees, while Jacobsen was the incisive critic and virtuoso, painting the final perspectives in watercolour to convince the developer of the project's superiority.

After a hard working day, Arne Jacobsen would sometimes snap: "I'm sick of aesthetics!" Nonetheless, his indisputable artistic sensibility needed relentless stimulation and craved new projects. As the former employee, architect Knud Holscher once said: "Basically, I found Arne Jacobsen a very modest person and humble about his projects [...] He wasn't into self-promotion. In fact, he had an unambitious attitude to architecture; he just wanted to do things as well as possible and to improve things."

Unlike many other major architects of the 20th century, Arne Jacobsen appears to have been very pragmatic, almost self-effacing. He was not a campaigner, driven by social indignation and political agendas, nor did he assume the role of modern genius and visionary guru. Although there may be an ethical dimension to designing functional buildings, his quest for aesthetic harmony seems to have been equally driven by simplification and good proportions.

### **SØHOLM IN PERSPECTIVE**

If we compare Arne Jacobsen's house in Klampenborg with the two other houses he designed for himself, there are both clear differences and similarities. Just after graduating, he designed the house on Gotfred Rodes Vej in Charlottenlund (1928-29), which features the programmatic approach and slight uncertainty of the novice. Whereas, in Søholm, several rooms are joined together in a smooth sequence over several floors, the layout of the house on Gotfred Rodes Vej is relatively conventional.

Together with the flat roof and white, plastered walls, the cubic shapes, which both protrude and recede, forming patios and sheltered spots, invest the house on Gotfred Rodes Vej with a totally modern look in the international style of the time. Søholm, on the other hand, has clearer links to tradition, with its greyish-yellow brickwork, pitched roofs and solid, vertical chimneys adding a touch of domestic cosiness to the landscape.

Photo (left): Arne Jacobsen's own house on Gotfred Rodes Vej from 1929.

Photo (right): In the house on Strandvejen, the studio was in the basement. The small enclosure with a window overlooking the main room was Arne Jacobsen's office.

Two of Arne Jacobsen's staff in the studio late one night.





Arne Jacobsen's own holiday cottage in Odsherred from 1938. The house is also owned by Realdania By & Byg.

Meanwhile, Arne Jacobsen's cottage at Gudmindrup in Odsherred (1938), has spatial features that reappear later in Søholm: mainly the open connection between the dining area and the living room located on separate levels. The fireplace has a central position both practically and symbolically, and a large, horizontal panoramic window makes the view the living room's focal point. However, the roof profile does not yet play a major role vis-à-vis the building's silhouette, as it would later do in Søholm and other of Jacobsen's buildings in the 1950s.

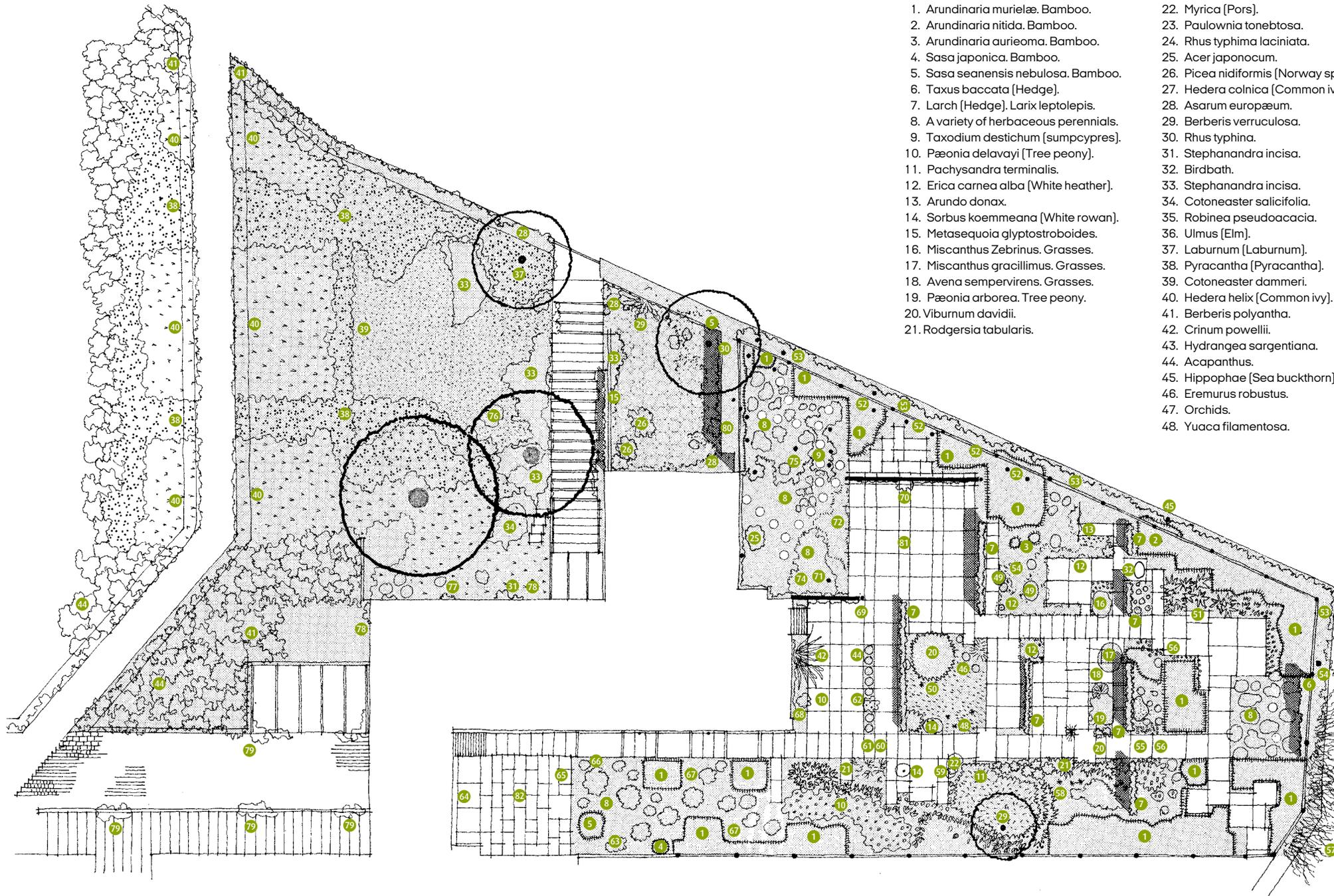
Whereas the houses on Gotfred Rodes Vej and at Gudmindrup exude white, international modernism, Søholm seems regionally connected and yet so universally empathetic by virtue of its precise layout and plastic spatiality, which do not fuse only the rooms inside into an entity, but also the house, its garden and the entire row of houses. It is clearly evident that this is the work of an architect who had attained total artistic maturity: as ordered and yet as vibrant as the rules of nature itself.

Throughout the house, Arne Jacobsen guides the viewer's gaze to the outside world. The position of the windows was carefully selected to frame a specific space in the garden or an element in the surroundings.





## PLAN OF THE GARDEN



1. *Arundinaria murielæ*. Bamboo.
2. *Arundinaria nitida*. Bamboo.
3. *Arundinaria aurieoma*. Bamboo.
4. *Sasa japonica*. Bamboo.
5. *Sasa seanensis nebulosa*. Bamboo.
6. *Taxus baccata* [Hedge].
7. Larch [Hedge]. *Larix leptolepis*.
8. A variety of herbaceous perennials.
9. *Taxodium distichum* [sumpcypres].
10. *Pæonia delavayi* [Tree peony].
11. *Pachysandra terminalis*.
12. *Erica carnea alba* [White heather].
13. *Arundo donax*.
14. *Sorbus koemmeans* [White rowan].
15. *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*.
16. *Miscanthus Zebrinus*. Grasses.
17. *Miscanthus gracillimus*. Grasses.
18. *Avena sempervirens*. Grasses.
19. *Pæonia arborea*. Tree peony.
20. *Viburnum davidii*.
21. *Rodgersia tabularis*.
22. *Myrica* [Fors].
23. *Paulownia tonebtosa*.
24. *Rhus typhima laciniata*.
25. *Acer japonicum*.
26. *Picea nidiformis* [Norway spruce].
27. *Hedera colnica* [Common ivy].
28. *Asarum europæum*.
29. *Berberis verruculosa*.
30. *Rhus typhina*.
31. *Stephanandra incisa*.
32. Birdbath.
33. *Stephanandra incisa*.
34. *Cotoneaster salicifolia*.
35. *Robinea pseudoacacia*.
36. *Ulmus* [Elm].
37. *Laburnum* [Laburnum].
38. *Pyracantha* [Pyracantha].
39. *Cotoneaster dammeri*.
40. *Hedera helix* [Common ivy].
41. *Berberis polyantha*.
42. *Crinum powellii*.
43. *Hydrangea sargentiana*.
44. *Acapanthus*.
45. *Hippophae* [Sea buckthorn].
46. *Eremurus robustus*.
47. Orchids.
48. *Yuaca filamentosa*.
49. *Pieris japonica*.
50. *Evonymus inima*.
51. *Gunnera chiliensis*.
52. *Pinus sylvestria* [Scots pine].
53. *Ribes alpinum*.
54. *Euphorbia lathyris*.
55. *Miscanthus variegatus*.
56. *Veratum nigrum*.
57. *Cotoneaster multiflora*.
58. *Lilium henryi*.
59. *Gypsophilla repens*.
60. *Gentiana aselepiadea*.
61. *Gentiana sino ornata*.
62. *Potophyllum emadi*.
63. *Clematis macropetale*.
64. *Hedera conglomerata*.
65. *Prunus schipkaensis*.
66. *Lilium gigantum*.
67. Common ivy *conglomerata*.
68. Fig.
69. *Clematis le coultre*.
70. *Akebia quirata*.
71. *Betula pendula*.
72. *Dianthus duches of fiet*.
73. *Rodgersia podophylla*.
74. *Lonocera tragophylla*.
75. *Pinus cembra*.
76. *Berberis stenophylla*.
77. *Prunus schipkaensis*.
78. *Aristolochia durior*.
79. *Lonicera henryi*.
80. *Viburnum rhytidophyllum*.
81. Sunny area.
82. Shaded area.

The garden originally contained more than 300 different plants. Today there are fewer than 100. Facing the road, there are even more old trees from the garden that belonged to the mansion, Søholm (now demolished), after which the entire development was named.

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