

# from belgium, with simplicity



This only looks like your standard four-bedroom Flemish home.

Fifteen miles north of Brussels, in the tiny town of Aalst, Filip Janssens' 1938 row house appears much like its neighbors—until you open the front door. Behind the traditional brick facade is a sunny, quintessentially modern interior, all clean lines and white walls, devised entirely by Janssens and his wife, Heidi, a fashion-marketing director. Their desire: Create a comfortable, utility-first home for themselves and their two children. But just because it's pared down doesn't mean it's cold. Janssens holds to the "less is more" sensibility of design: "Decorating for us means putting the right objects in the right place." Thanks to this careful intentionality, every room harbors a surprise—a jolt of color, a collection of vintage finds, a clever DIY flourish—giving the stark backdrop rich dimension and warmth.

**FLOOR TILES** Porcelain "Buxy" from \$8.32/square foot, Stone Source (212) 979-6400  
**WALL PAINT** (similar to shown) Decorator's White, benjaminmoore.com for stores

For furniture designer Filip Janssens, an exquisite home isn't about expensive objects or fancy embellishments—it's about the elegance of streamlined-yet-intimate spaces that accommodate the hectic realities of family life. He shares the ingenuity behind his vision of cheerful modernism.

photographs by LUC ROYMANS produced by DARA CAPONIGRO  
styling by REBECCA OMWEG text by DEB SCHWARTZ



Skylights and a glass wall bring the outdoors in.

dominomag.com



## using multifunctional design as decor

A family of four generates no small amount of clutter, a reality the Janssens gamely outwit with cunning storage solutions that also establish their home's overall aesthetic. The dining room is anchored by floor-to-ceiling cabinets that hide everything from children's toys—in the lower compartments, for better access—to stereo equipment. Janssens built the unit out of inexpensive MDF (medium-density fiberboard), drilling finger holes in lieu of knobs and punctuating the closed cubes with open ones. In the living room (opposite), round skylights rigged with electric lights heighten the look and provide illumination day and night: "Sunlight can pass through during the day, and in the evening—voilà," Janssens says.

Janssens' wife, Heidi, displays books and magazines in the storage unit's open shelves.

## enlivening spare areas with one-of-a-kind touches

The Janssens may be proudly utilitarian, but inventive details give their approach a welcoming playfulness. In the living room, a lime-green frame, also made of MDF, is a multitasking marvel: It camouflages a radiator and pipes, morphs into seating and storage (the base opens up) and also serves as a striking sculptural element. Their modernist mandate doesn't preclude occasional flights of pure fancy: Janssens treated a dining-room wall (right) as a canvas for a floral motif he lifted from a fabric swatch. After drawing the pattern on the wall—freehand!—he painted the design's negative space in cream. More fun functionality elsewhere: The dining table and the desk (opposite page) are lined with whimsical true-red trim, a Tetris-like set of shelves displays quirky '60s vases, and a rainbow of dishes show through the frosted glass of the kitchen's cool metal cabinets (center).



A glass top adds gloss and durability to a painted table; contrasting lamps supply some graphic punch.

CHAIRS "Fjord H" from \$400 each, Moroso (212) 334-7222 PENDANT LIGHTS "FL/Y" \$293 Kartell (866) 854-8823



Huge doors that swing out make it easy for the whole family to be together, even when they're each doing their own thing.

The custom frame delineates a movie screen for the projector located across the room—a novel take on the home theater.



The original wood floors are a warm counterpoint to a steel IKEA kitchen.

WALL CABINETS "Akurum/Avsikt" \$92 each, BASE CABINETS "Akurum/Rubrik" \$315 each, CABINET PULLS "Attest" from \$7.99 each, and PORTABLE LIGHTS (under wall cabinets) "Non" \$14.99/pair, all at ikea.com for stores STOOL Shin & Tomoko Azumi "Lem" from \$725 Schat Import Agencies (336) 887-9296



Puzzlelike shelving shares the pop feel of the wheeled, glass-topped desk.

WALL SHELVES Custom "Tetris" about \$1,625 filipjanssens.be for information

The headboard's curlicues are the sole bit of ornament in the bedroom.

A wall of custom closets accommodates all of the couple's clothes.



Hidden shelves (the undersink cabinet is open on both sides) keep a minimalist bath maximally clutter-free.

## making the most of white

"The house used to be very dark, and we wanted something bright and airy," Janssens says of the decision to pursue a predominantly pale interior. The overall effect is definitely clean and expansive, but hardly uniform: In the master bedroom, multiple textures—including a coffered ceiling; a rough, painted-wood floor; a dense sheepskin throw and a hand-cut MDF floral appliqué on the headboard—prevent a sterile feeling, while in the bathroom, the ethereal addition of a floating sink and a clear glass-tile wall fosters a calm that Janssens describes as "futuristic Zen." In younger daughter Cato's bedroom, plain walls enhance the appeal of a 9-year-old's favorite things, such as the jungle-gym-ish bed (made by Janssens) and a menagerie of toys, all of which can be swapped out as her enthusiasms change.

**PENDANT LAMP** (similar to shown, right) Glass "PS" \$49.99 [ikea.com](http://ikea.com) for stores **SINK** (above) "Zero 100" \$1,825 Hastings Tile & Bath (800) 351-0038 **BATH TUB** "Squaro" \$2,000 [villeroy-boch.com](http://villeroy-boch.com) for stores **WALL TILES** Glass mosaic \$25.55/square foot, [Bisazza](http://Bisazza.com) (212) 334-7130

opposite page: **SHEEPSKIN** (similar to shown) 4' x 6' Tibetan \$499 [highsierrafurs.com](http://highsierrafurs.com) **FLOOR PAINT** (similar to shown) Porch & Floor Enamel in Decorator's White [benjaminmoore.com](http://benjaminmoore.com) for stores



Painted by Janssens, the image of comic-book hero Tintin watches over Cato as she sleeps.