

# RETREAT


Inspired Homes  
and Ways of Living



Lucy Glade-Wright



# CABIN



Inspired by a profound  
love of life and family

De Biesbosch National Park,  
the Netherlands

Many of us have fond memories of building treehouses and forts when we were kids. There was something exhilarating about creating a space of your own hidden in the garden or under a pile of bed sheets – the ultimate imaginative escape. As a child, Caspar Schots spent most of his time in the nearby forest, building huts of different shapes and materials. This obsession followed him into adult life, and he continued to hone his talent for cabin design as the years went on. His latest cabin could be considered to be simply an evolution of his childhood play; the result of a lifetime of exploration into building and human behaviour.

Located in De Biesbosch National Park in the Netherlands, Caspar's first cabin prototype was designed for his mum Anna, who wanted a multifunctional cabin for her forest plot. Caspar had just lost his father to cancer and he felt compelled to design the cabin to help his family recover from grief. His perception was that his father's passing had caused them to become somewhat unsettled, and he sought to design a place where they could come together and feel connected with each other again.

At the time of conceiving the cabin, Caspar was not an architect but instead had just completed a degree in physics and was about to commence study at an art academy in Amsterdam when he began work on this cabin. Designed to symbolise a traditional home as a child might draw a house, with a simple 45-degree sloped roof, this cabin is anything but conventional. Built from high-performance sustainable timber and aluminium, it incorporates a robust sliding component that enables you to open up or close off the cabin in a variety of ways. This versatile movement of entire sections of the home creates a uniquely dynamic relationship between the home, nature and people.

Occupying approximately 30 square metres (323 square feet), the cabin features a queen bed, kitchen, bathroom, underfloor storage, sunken bath and outdoor shower. The birch plywood interior is fully insulated and airtight, resulting in comfortable temperatures even when it's well below zero outside. Minimalist with a slight 'Japandi' aesthetic, the tranquil interior intentionally focuses your attention outward towards the natural surroundings.

The cabin design involved much trial and error, with the moveable component requiring that a weight of 3 tonnes be able to slide seamlessly by hand. It took about four weeks to get it right, and Caspar has since continued to improve on his design – perfecting measurements, weights and materials in consideration of differing temperature and humidity conditions.

It took just ten months to build the cabin and Caspar could not have imagined what this loving design offering to his mum would inspire. Some photos of the cabin were published and his life began to change significantly after the exposure. Caspar received a scholarship to study at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London, and a backer saw his designs and provided the means to develop his cabin concept further.

Cabin Anna, as it's lovingly known, is now available for people to purchase for their own properties. Caspar has spent six years refining every detail and creating a modular system that requires only short construction time and minimal disruption to the surrounding environment. Cabin Anna is designed so that 80 per cent of materials can be produced locally all over the world on Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machines, ensuring a low transportation footprint. Its design means it can also be dismantled and moved away in just a few days without leaving a trace.

Anna loves her own cabin of course. She spends her days swimming in the pond with her dog nearby, taking long walks, making coffee on the stove and being inspired to write. She loves what this cabin has given her, especially after so much loss. It was in the cabin that she wrote a book about life after losing a partner, describing the process of healing and rebuilding. She was able to share her own experience with others thanks to the kindness of her own family and the connection back to life that Caspar helped facilitate through the cabin.

There are so many elements that make this cabin exceptional, not least that there was no architectural background behind the design. It expresses a wild, childlike imagination with a playful sense of experimentation behind the process. But ultimately the design arose from a desire to connect with loved ones and with life itself, and that's what makes this home profoundly special.





'I felt that the cabin had to be a place that would ground us as a family. My father's passing had caused us to float and search for new roots in reality... I started dreaming of how we could be surrounded by life instead of being shielded from it.'

Casper















### Q&A with Anna

**How has your life changed since having the cabin?**  
My life has not really changed but it has brought me a lot of new experiences. I wrote my book in the cabin; it's about how to continue your life after losing your partner. It talks about how life can be good although you might think it never will be again.

**Where is the cabin situated on your property?**  
The cabin overlooks my swimming pond, so from my writing table and my bed I can see the birds – even the kingfisher catching little fish for breakfast!

**How do you spend your time in the cabin?**  
My dog Siem and I use the cabin a lot, and I love being in nature with my dog. We take long walks and I love birdwatching. I'm also very inspired to write here. My children love to sleep over when they visit me, my friends' children also come from time to time and love to spend some peaceful days and beautiful nights here.

**What's your favourite thing about living where you do?**  
I love my house and my garden. We bought the plot twenty-five years ago and designed it for the whole family. It was a very special opportunity to be able to do this with our children.