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A vision of an English-style stone cottage with a modern addition comes to life in the Northwest Hills.

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Perhaps only a residential architect would see the potential to join a weathered stone cottage with a new, ultra-modern addition. The result is a property with distinct living spaces for two families, plus a communal area in the middle.

Morten Smidt

Over the course of about five winters, with their three young, rambunctious boys in tow, designers Sarah Jefferys and Stewart Osborne would leave their Brooklyn, N.Y., home for Cornwall, Conn., renting a weekend getaway. Feeling as if transported to another universe with Mohawk Mountain Ski Area and a lake for ice skating nearby, they fell in love with the Litchfield Hills' bucolic setting and its magical change of pace.

"I remembered Cornwall from visiting as a child, and thinking, 'What a quaint place,' " says Jefferys, who grew up in England, adding that the area resembles the English countryside with its rolling hills and stone walls. "My parents used to live in India, and we'd visit Cornwall with their dear friends — the wife is Indian, and the husband is American with a sister who lived in Cornwall."

Jefferys and Osborne wanted a vacation home of their own, but with their busy schedules and their now-teenage boys playing baseball and traveling to games, they decided to look for a place with their family friends' son — Jefferys' lifelong friend — who continues to visit Cornwall with his own family, but lives full-time in Delhi, India. Despite scarce real estate turnover in the area, they found a small, charming, three-bedroom stone cottage with gorgeous mountain views and incredible potential.



A residential architect's merged vision of an English-style stone cottage and a modern addition has come to life in the Northwest Hills.

Morten Smidt

"I initially didn't want to see it," remembers Jefferys, who owns [Sarah Jefferys Design](#), based in Manhattan's SoHo district with offices in Connecticut and Rhode Island. "But I was getting frustrated with the lack of inventory, so we went to take a look. After seeing it, we fell in love immediately. The views are stunning. And we realized that we could transform it into something really beautiful."

The two families put an offer on it the next day. After about a year of enjoying the home as is, Jefferys and her husband, principal and chief operations officer at [NAVA Partners](#), an architecture and real estate development company, were ready to marry the 1948 English-style stone cottage with an ultra-modern, passive home addition. And their friend/co-owner of the house gave them full rein to go about the design as they saw fit.



A bedroom in the original stone cottage has a clean, contemporary feel that still has a rustic vibe to match the structure and wooded setting.

Morten Smidt

“My husband and I worked together on designing our Brooklyn townhouse, which was challenging because we had babies at the time,” says Jefferys. “But the

Cornwall home, while challenging, was easier. He was more inclined to keep within the New England vernacular pitched roof, where I wanted a very modern addition that was in total contrast to the existing structure. At one point, he went a whole different direction with a glass box, which was beautiful, but not very practical in terms of livability and sustainability. So, in the end, we came up with a blend of both of our designs.”

Completed in 2021, the new house is a dramatic union of old and new that maximizes natural light and beckons in the lush landscape of the property and surrounding Mohawk Mountain State Park. Airtight and featuring a fully insulated building envelope using high-performance, triple-pane Ikon windows, the addition’s energy-efficient construction saves 60 to 70 percent of heating and cooling usage compared to typical code-compliant buildings in the U.S., according to the owners. A minimal heating and cooling system is used along with heat emissions from appliances and occupants to help keep the home at a comfortable and consistent indoor temperature.



You couldn't ask for a better view than the one you get here brushing your teeth or soaking in the tub.
Morten Smidt

The old cottage is now more energy efficient and sustainable. Insulation was added under new pine flooring, porcelain flooring at the entry, and wherever walls and ceilings were opened up. And while they thought of replacing all the windows in the cottage with triple-pane windows like those in the new addition, they couldn't bring themselves to do so — "the windows were just too beautiful and historic." Instead, storm windows are used in the winter and a few bigger cutouts of glass were added. A new heating system was also installed, as well as an on-demand hot water heater.

The modern addition flows with the old structure, both inside and out. The exterior features weathered cypress wood similar in color to the stone. Inside, the stone cottage and addition become one where the original stone den, which features teal-and-gold David Hicks honeycomb wallpaper, exposed joists, and an old fireplace, meets the new modern kitchen. This connection is a celebrated first-floor focal point of the home created to maximize views while bridging the differing ceiling heights between the old and new structures. The second floors are not connected.

"Glass sliding doors fully retract so you can be in the kitchen, but feel like you're outside in nature," says Jefferys. "I adore clean lines, modern design, big expanses of glass, and when the boundaries between exterior and interior become blurred."



The light, modern kitchen, with large-format windows offerings countryside views, is where the two wings of the structure come together.

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There's a transparency to the home's design, which was informed by the landscape and views. The second floor cantilevers over the exterior deck, allowing views through the entire property. Large, corner glass windows upstairs in the main and guest bedrooms make it feel like you're in the middle of the forest, says Jefferys. A bathtub sits directly in front of one of the upstairs windows.



The light, modern kitchen, with large-format windows offerings countryside views, is where the two wings of the structure come together.

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“Growing up in London, I had an incredible art history and architecture teacher and fell in love with modern architecture,” remembers Jefferys. “I also studied in Paris for a year and saw how the Europeans complement the old with modern beautifully.”

Visits to India with her parents also had a lasting impact. It’s here where she developed an appreciation for ancient history, architecture and bright colors. While she works to create minimalist spaces, her designs also tend to have pops of color, which make for a vibrant, cozy home.

A lot of furnishings are from [Fabindia](#), which uses sustainable practices to create handmade products by craftspeople across rural India. Colorful rugs, window coverings, and cushion covers throughout the house complete both the old and new spaces, each having internal staircases leading up to two-bedroom, two-bathroom wings. The unique architectural design is the ideal setup for two families to share, but still have privacy. Each wing also has its own living room, but then there's a kitchen to gather.



This living room (one of two) is another example of mixing old and new, with country-style built-ins and wooden ceiling beams playing with vibrant fabrics.

Morten Smidt

"I'm so passionate about design. I could design for hours," says Jefferys. "If it's your own, you can go on forever and never call it done. But I had a strong vision of what I wanted."

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