

# COTTAGE CONTEMPORARY

INCREASING SPACE AND LIGHT WITHOUT  
LOSING CHARM BY THE SEA

Architecture by William A. Schulz  
Interior Design by David Kleinberg  
Text by Susan Cheever  
Photography by Jeff Goldberg/Esto



MATT WARGO

When the owners of a quaint, rose-covered shingled cottage near the sea decided to do a major renovation, they knew just what they wanted—a quaint, rose-covered shingled cottage near the sea. Originally the barn for a nearby mansion, the cottage nestles between the great pines and specimen beeches of a landscaped meadow. “It was a sweet little house,” the husband says. “This was a big project, but we wanted to keep it low-key.” In fact, he wanted to keep it exactly as it was—only much bigger and with a different floor plan. “We needed to give them a lot of room on the inside without making it look huge from the outside,” says designer David Kleinberg. “We all loved the charm of the house.”

Inside, though, the house was less than charming. “It didn’t work,” says the wife. “It had been added on to, and it had the feel of a railroad flat.” To add rooms, architect William A. Schulz kept the existing roofline and built a new gambrel to balance the old, tucking a master bedroom under the dormer. The living room was expanded onto a terrace; a maid’s room became part of the kitchen. Doors were custom-made, windows stacked and the exterior of the house detailed to preserve the original look. A scaffold was built so the roses could grow while the house was under reconstruction. “The idea was to make the house functional and modernize it but to keep it overgrown,” the husband explains. “We went to great extremes to keep it the same.”

For a couple who wanted to retain the charm of their shingled cottage, designer David Kleinberg and architect William A. Schulz expanded the spaces without losing the house’s original feeling. ABOVE: “It’s still a garden cottage,” says Schulz, “only now it’s a glorified garden cottage.”

“Rather than constructing a new building, we broke down the scale,” Schulz explains. “We kept the existing roofline, continuing it in the addition.” OPPOSITE: Brick floors and oak wainscoting define the stair hall, which occupies what was once a small entranceway.



Photographs by David Stephenson are displayed in the living room, which was extended some 20 feet onto the terrace. Kleinberg brought in such 1940s French pieces as the open-arm chairs and the low table. The sconce is by Jean Royère. Osborne & Little plaid. Stark carpet.

At the entrance, Schulz created a two-story stair hall with cerused oak wainscoting. There, an artichoke-shaped chandelier designed in 1927 by Poul Henningsen hangs above a brass-and-burl-maple Italian table, which is across from a 1940s bench—one of many French pieces in the downstairs rooms. “They give the house a sense of performance,” Kleinberg says. “It’s not just a summer house. There’s no wicker there.” In fact, the house is a symphony of opposites. It’s a big house that looks small, a new house that looks old, a house furnished with a wild eclecticism that appears calmly uniform, as if it had been “popped out of a box,” as Kleinberg says. “I just put things I like in this house. The overriding principle is that there is no overriding principle.”

In the double-height living room, furnishings run the gamut from the bass note of a heavy nineteenth-century French klismos chair to the grace notes of a painted pine table and a Thebes stool. Kleinberg arranged parallel seating areas, splitting a pair of English marquetry mirrors, two African garden seats, French 1940s brass lamps and four Jean Royère sconces and filling in with chairs and sofas upholstered in neutral linens and prints. “The palette throughout the interior was always going to be neutral,” Kleinberg says. “The color comes from the gardens.”

When Kleinberg was still at Trinity College in Connecticut, planning to go to architecture school, he took a summer job in Manhattan with Robert Denning and Vincent Fourcade. He forgot all about going to architecture school. After that he worked with Mara Palmer and then with Parish-Hadley, before going on to start his own firm in 1997. “I’ve never been one of those decorators who want people to think there was no decorator,” he says. “I don’t think of myself as a cutting-edge person; I think of myself as a classical person, but a classical person in the modern world. I like things to





ABOVE: A maid's room and bath were absorbed into the new kitchen, which features a cathedral ceiling. The French oak stools date from the 1940s. The glass-topped table is from B&B Italia. Range and hood from Viking. Backsplash tiles, Ann Sachs. Sub-Zero refrigerator.

OPPOSITE: A landscape by Carol Anthony is set between 19th-century English candlesticks in the dining room, whose flow was improved by the addition of pocket doors to the living room. Kleinberg designed the armchairs, covered in Edelman leather. Baccarat glasses.





The architect situated the new master suite beneath the gambrel roof. "The ceiling gives the room a more traditional feeling," he says. The bronze-faced fireplace, Kleinberg notes, "is out of the usual vernacular." Drapery and shade linen, Manuel Canovas. Donghia chair fabric.

look as if they'd been assembled—someone brings back candlesticks from Japan, someone buys a chair they like out of a shop window."

The family room, paneled in pine beaded board, is all leather and muted stripes. "I wanted this room to have more of a mountain house feel," says Kleinberg. "The family room and the living room are sort of opposite sides of the coin. This is a nocturnal space, a place to play cards or have a drink."

If the family room evokes the Adirondacks, the master suite reflects the house's cottage roots, with its ceiling following the lines of the gambrel roof. Kleinberg installed striped linen draperies and faced the fireplace with bronze. "I didn't want to squeeze a mantel under that sloped ceiling," he says, "but I wanted it to be modern-looking."

Even the dining room—the most formal room in the house—was designed to accommodate an informal family. "We didn't want anything too highfalutin," the husband explains. Kleinberg arranged ten leather armchairs around the couple's nineteenth-century English extension table. English ebony-and-ivory candlesticks light the mantel, along with a pair of 1930s French ceramic sconces. The adjacent kitchen, illuminated by Poul Henningsen hanging glass lamps, is designed around a granite-topped island joined by 1940s French oak stools. In the corner, a collection of antique chairs surrounds a glass-and-steel table for casual meals.

"These people live properly but not pretentiously," David Kleinberg says. "There's always somewhere to put your drink. You can sit around in flip-flops and khakis. The dog has the run of the house, and he's always coming back wet. It's a very comfortable house." The clients agree. "We needed to make it work, but we tried to make it so that if you looked at the house, you wouldn't see much of a change," says the wife. "It has the same character, but it's lovely to live here now." □