

WILD LIFE

Interior designer Sheena and her husband Paul created the perfect winter getaway in upstate New York by letting nature do the talking...

Photography/Matthew Williams * Words/Luke Tebbutt



EXTERIOR

The house was designed by Lang Architecture and took 12 months to complete. 'We visited the site a lot during construction because we were so excited,' says Sheena. 'I rarely get to work on ground-up projects in New York, so it was fun to see the house take form from beginning to end.'

Get the look The exterior wood is painted in black Benjamin Moore Arborcoat semi-transparent stain. The wall light is from Home Depot. The planters are from a local nursery.

HOME PROFILE
 THE OWNERS British interior designer Sheena Murphy, who runs Brooklyn-based studio nune, and her American husband Paul, a tech entrepreneur. They have a daughter Matilda, three, and dog William. THE PROPERTY A three-bedroom new build in the Catskills, upstate New York. The ground floor has an entrance hall, open-plan living, dining and kitchen area, and a guest bedroom and bathroom. The first floor has a den, a bedroom with en suite, the main bedroom with walk-in wardrobe and the main bathroom.

DINING AREA
 Neutral colours and natural materials tie the house to its setting. Even the light above the dining table branches out like a twig. 'Everything is focused on nature and wildlife,' says Sheena. 'We'll be having dinner and a deer will appear in the garden, which is magical.' **Get the look** The dining table is vintage - find similar at auction houses. The Hoffmann chairs are by Design Within Reach. The Waldorf light is by Lambert & Fils. The vase and bowl are from Recreation Center. The pictures are from TRNK.



H

ow many stars are there in the sky? From Sheena and Paul Murphy's house in the Catskills, New York, it seems like an infinite number. Their weekend getaway home is just two and a half hours from their Brooklyn apartment, but it feels like a world away. Every view is wider, every sound is crisper and every star is shinier. 'We can see them from our bed at night,' says Sheena. 'We've also seen deer, raccoons, foxes and a bear's paw print in the snow.'

The couple decided to find a vacant plot of land and build when Sheena became pregnant with their daughter Matilda, now three. For them, it was a chance to disconnect from the city grind and realign themselves with family, friends and nature, in a location sandwiched between state parks.

'Matilda is our alarm clock, so we wake up early, maybe go for a hike, spend the day in comfy clothes, and then enjoy the evening sitting by the fire with friends or wine, or both,' says Sheena. 'The closest shop is 20 minutes by car, so it forces you to buy what you need and not really leave.'

They hired New York city practice Lang Architecture to design the house and source local materials, with Sheena, who runs interior design studio nune, choosing the finishes.

'Lang had designed houses in the area before, so they were able to put us in touch with the best builders,' says Sheena. 'In a remote area like this, where choices are limited, that was important. It took a year, and I've never seen a project completed with so few hiccups.'

The idea was to create a contemporary cabin that would reflect - and almost disappear into - its setting, with huge windows and lots of wood, which is stained black on the exterior to camouflage the house among the trees. 'This location is all about being close to nature, so we wanted the house to feel casual, rather than flashy or contrived,' says Sheena. 'The light and views here are spectacular, and we didn't want anything to detract from that.'

For the interior, Sheena and Paul chose colours, textures and shapes that echo those outside. The kitchen wall tiles are the colour of moss. The long-haired sheepskin rugs look like they could have been shorn at a local farm. And the wooden coffee table in the living room looks like it's been cut straight from the roots of a felled tree.

'I focused on layering natural elements, but in a restrained way,' says Sheena. 'I grew up in Victorian houses in Britain, so I lean towards cosy, full interiors, whereas Paul is the opposite - he would be happy living in a white box with just the essentials. So we had a healthy tension, and the result is a meeting halfway.'

Both agree, however, that it's the people inside who make a home. 'A house only becomes a home when you have the people you love in it,' says Sheena, whose favourite memory so far is the Thanksgiving - or, as she calls it, Friendsgiving - just after they moved in. 'Our plans to visit family fell through, so we decided to see who was around last-minute and ended up with 13 at the table,' she says. 'We had turkey and cherry pie, and it was exactly what we had imagined this house would be - friends, food and togetherness.'

And even when it's just the three of them, life is never far away. 'We didn't realise it when we bought the property, but there is a stream that cuts through the land and occasionally it gushes,' says Sheena. 'It can be dead silent up here, but you can always hear the water, the birds and sometimes the wolves howling at night.'

For more information about Sheena's work, visit nunenune.com. See more of Lang Architecture's work at langarchitecture.com



THE DEN

A large picture window frames a view of the surrounding trees, like a painting. 'We wanted tons of windows,' says Sheena. 'Our aim was for it to feel like we are in the woods and to see the wildlife outside.'

Get the look The Amicable Split bench is from Blu Dot. The rug is from TRNK.

LIVING AREA

'Material selection really mattered in this home,' says Sheena. 'I wanted everything to feel serene. This location is about connecting with nature, so the house should feel soft and humble - not glamorous or flashy.'

Get the look This is the CH163 sofa by Hans Wegner at Carl Hansen & Son. The cushions on the sofa are by Kufri. The throw is from Faribault Woolen Mill. The wood stool is by Andrianna Shamaris. The armchair is from DwellStudio. The coffee table is from South of Market. The woodburning stove is by Wittus. The planter is from West Elm. The baskets are from The Citizenry. This is a Round Chambers mirror from Croft House. The dark wood Senate chair is by Sawkille. The brass wall light is from Workstead. The rug is by Restoration Hardware.



KITCHEN

Sheena chose a custom-made island with a walnut lining. 'As a Brit, I grew up in a small house with a small kitchen and a tiny fridge, so this kitchen feels so big and luxurious to me,' says Sheena. 'I love to make meals from cookbooks here. It's the opposite of our life in the city, where every recipe is followed with a phone in hand.'

Get the look These are the Mitre stools from Souda.

The vase and bowls on the breakfast bar are by Rachel Saunders.

The green tiles are by Heath Ceramics. The oven, extractor fan and dishwasher are by Fisher & Paykel. The mixer tap is by Delta.



↖ **GUEST
BEDROOM**

Brass has been used as an accent throughout the house, as seen here in the bedside lights. It is in keeping with the home's elemental, mostly wooden material palette, but adds a touch of lustre and luxury. **Get the look** This is an Alchemy matt black bed from CB2. The bedlinen is from West Elm. The throw is from Joinery. The woven basket is from Westwind Orchard. These are Wallace bedside lights from Onefortythree. The picture is from Stilleben. The dark rug is from TRNK.

← **MAIN
BATHROOM**

The double basin was custom-made using fibre-reinforced concrete. **Get the look** The Crescent round wall mirrors are from CB2. These are Shaded sconce wall lights from Onefortythree. The tray is by OyOy. The soap dispenser is from CB2. The vase is by Natalie Weinberger. The make-up bag is from Zana. The woven baskets are from Connected Goods. These are quartzite floor tiles by Walker Zanger.

HOME TRUTHS

Who would you like to be stuck in an elevator with?
Michelle Obama.

What makes a great winter get-together?
Snow, fire and friends.

What's the best advice you've been given? My grandfather said 'what's the worst that can happen?' when I was considering a move to India, and now I ask that question every time I'm considering a risk.

What would you like to have more of?
Laughter and plants.

What would you like to have less of?
Inequality and hate.

What is the last thing you bought for yourself? The Hennie Everyday Rattan bag from St. Agni - it has the same pattern as our dining chairs.

What song would you choose for your personal soundtrack? *The Oogum Boogum Song* by Brenton Woods from 1967. It's quirky, upbeat and fun.

MASTER BEDROOM

Lang Architecture sourced wood locally to build the house, using oak for the floor and ceiling.

Get the look This is the Nook bed from Blu Dot.

The bedlinen is from Schoolhouse Electric. The throw is from Joinery.

The rug is by Dash & Albert.

This is the Key side table from Hem. This is a Woven wall sconce from Pigeon Toe Ceramics.

The clock is by Braun. This is a Soren chair by Coil + Drift.

The throw on the chair is from Cuyana. The picture is a gift from a client.



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