

THE NEW-BUILD

WITH A NATURAL FOCUS

Built into a steep slope and with spectacular views of the Dorset countryside, this contemporary home celebrates the integrity of the raw materials it's made from, teaming them with beautiful textiles and natural elements to create an industrial look with heart

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ucked into a Dorset hillside, the little single-storey stone worker's cottage captured Majeda and Gary Clarke's hearts from the moment they first saw it. Sitting just below the road and virtually hidden by trees, it had sweeping views down the valley to the sea and was, they felt, a rare and special plot – while the traditional long house, for sale with planning permission, was crying out to be renovated and enjoyed once more.

So they snapped it up with the idea of gutting and reworking the interior, but keeping the building as a simple cottage. However, after several years of dealing with the challenges and costs of foundations that were sinking into the sandy ground of the steep hillside, they were forced to have a radical rethink. 'We had to have the foundations secured,' says Majeda, 'and it was going to cost us so much, our original plan to just change the interior didn't make sense, so we decided instead to go all out and build a three-bedroom, architect-designed house.'

Keeping the original stone walls on the road side (from where the property still appears to be a cottage), Majeda and Gary have created a modern, well-insulated, light-filled home. Banks of south-facing sliding glass doors, which lead to a wide, decked balcony, bring the outside in and make the most of the impressive views. Inside, many of the raw materials used to build the house have been left exposed, creating a unique space with a utility aesthetic, that also feels relaxed and comfortable. 'This house is all about the raw materials,' says Majeda, who is a textile designer by trade. 'But it wasn't planned that way. I think we just started to notice their beauty as the house was taking shape and thought, "Why cover them up?"'

The house is on two levels, with the main living space comprising an open-plan lounge, kitchen and dining area, while the bedrooms and bathrooms are a few steps down on a slightly lower level. On the ground floor, to retain as much height as possible and to keep the space feeling open and airy, Majeda and Gary have left the steel beam and wooden rafters of the roof exposed, while a number of roof lights have been added to help to bring light into the back of the room.

'Once you decide you're not going to cover things up, you have to be careful about your choice of materials,' says Majeda. 'We used lovely panels of beech wood to fill the space between the rafters, where we would have got away with cheaper pine if they weren't going to be on show.' MicroCrete, which resembles polished, poured concrete, was used for the floors, while throughout the ground floor the raw plaster walls have been sealed but left unpainted.

'When we walked in and saw the raw plaster, we thought, "Why paint the walls when the plaster is so beautiful?" That very pale pink →

EXTERIOR

Above far left and second from left From the road the modern house still has the air of a worker's cottage, with raw materials and unfussy finishes connecting with its heritage

HALLWAY

Above centre right MicroCrete was used for the floors and has been taken partway up the wall in the lower-level corridor. 'This allowed us to create the illusion of a greater expanse of floor in a small space, and also to delineate the private part of the house,' says Majeda. Large terracotta pot, Nkuku

STEPS

Above right Walls have been left in bare plaster and sealed, providing the raw finish the owners were looking for. Steps from the main floor lead to a lower level, where the bedrooms and bathrooms are located. On the wall is an antique Chinese window screen. Rustic elm bench, an antiques dealer in Devon

LIVING ROOM

The wooden rafters and steel roof beam have been left exposed. 'We wanted the bare bones to be visible,' says Majeda. Abstract painting, mid-century artist Hans Hartung. **Chairs**, Swoon. Shell **armchair**, Hans J Wegner



UTILITY AREA

Below right A closed-off separate laundry room allows the kitchen in the open-plan living space to remain free of clutter. **Cabinetry and panelling** in Railings, Farrow & Ball. **Sink**, Howdens. **Taps**, Perrin & Rowe. **Handles**, Devol

SITTING AREA

The plaster pink and indigo scheme was inspired by one of Majeda's wall hangings. Birch **pendants**, Secto Design. **Sofa**, Royal Design



KITCHEN

An aged copper panel sourced from a sheet-metal company in the Midlands serves as a splashback. Pantry Blue Shaker-style kitchen units, Devol

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and the blonde beech wood have influenced our decorating decisions.' Using these as base colours, the couple added dark accents, painting the roof beam black to tie in with the window frames and introducing a sofa and kitchen cupboards in dark inky blues. 'It's similar to the way I construct my textiles,' says Majeda, 'with a strong, dark shade used to ground the softer colours. I find it pulls everything together.'

While the raw materials and contemporary design of the house were important to Majeda and Gary, the couple were also keen that the space should be welcoming and not too clinical. Feeling that an industrial kitchen would be too much, they instead chose a Shaker style from Devol. 'When you've got a very modern build it's quite nice to have some fixtures and fittings that are more traditional – it makes it feel more homely,' says Majeda.

The look was enhanced by the addition of a long open shelf with Shaker pegs, and a large standalone larder cupboard, which is used to hide away all the kitchen clutter so that surfaces can be kept clear, essential in an open-plan space that's also used as the lounge. Antique

Persian rugs in rich reds, pinks and blues add warmth and comfort, while a dining table, chairs and pendant lights in natural wood tie in with the beech ceiling. Along the back wall a four-metre-long aged-copper splashback sourced from a sheet-metal company in Leicestershire brings an industrial feel.

In the bedrooms and bathrooms the soft pink and blue-black colour theme continues, although here the walls are painted. Further accent shades include rusts, greens, mints and teals picked out from some of Majeda's blankets, which bring texture and pattern on the beds. Dark green wood panelling on the back wall of the main bedroom, and forest green tiles in the ensuite, reflect the canopy of trees, just a step away through the glass door. On this section the balcony has a roof and a swing seat, so it can be used in all weather. 'In sunshine or rain, you can come out with your cup of tea and look out to sea,' says Majeda. 'It's one of my favourite spots in the house.'

The house is available for lets as 'Fjall' via [uniquehomestays.com](https://www.uniquehomestays.com). For information about Majeda's work, see [majedaclarke.com](https://www.majedaclarke.com)