



Stylish sheds, cabins, and retreats from around the world reveal creative small spaces where their owners can relax, work, chill out, and escape.

Many different styles of buildings are included, from traditional, eco-chic, log cabins, and humble sheds for storage to artists' studios, holiday cabins, entertaining and home work spaces, plus exciting architectural projects.

Gorgeous photography accompanied by real-life stories and style notes offer plenty of inspiration and how-to for converting the traditional backyard shed or cabin into your own special space.



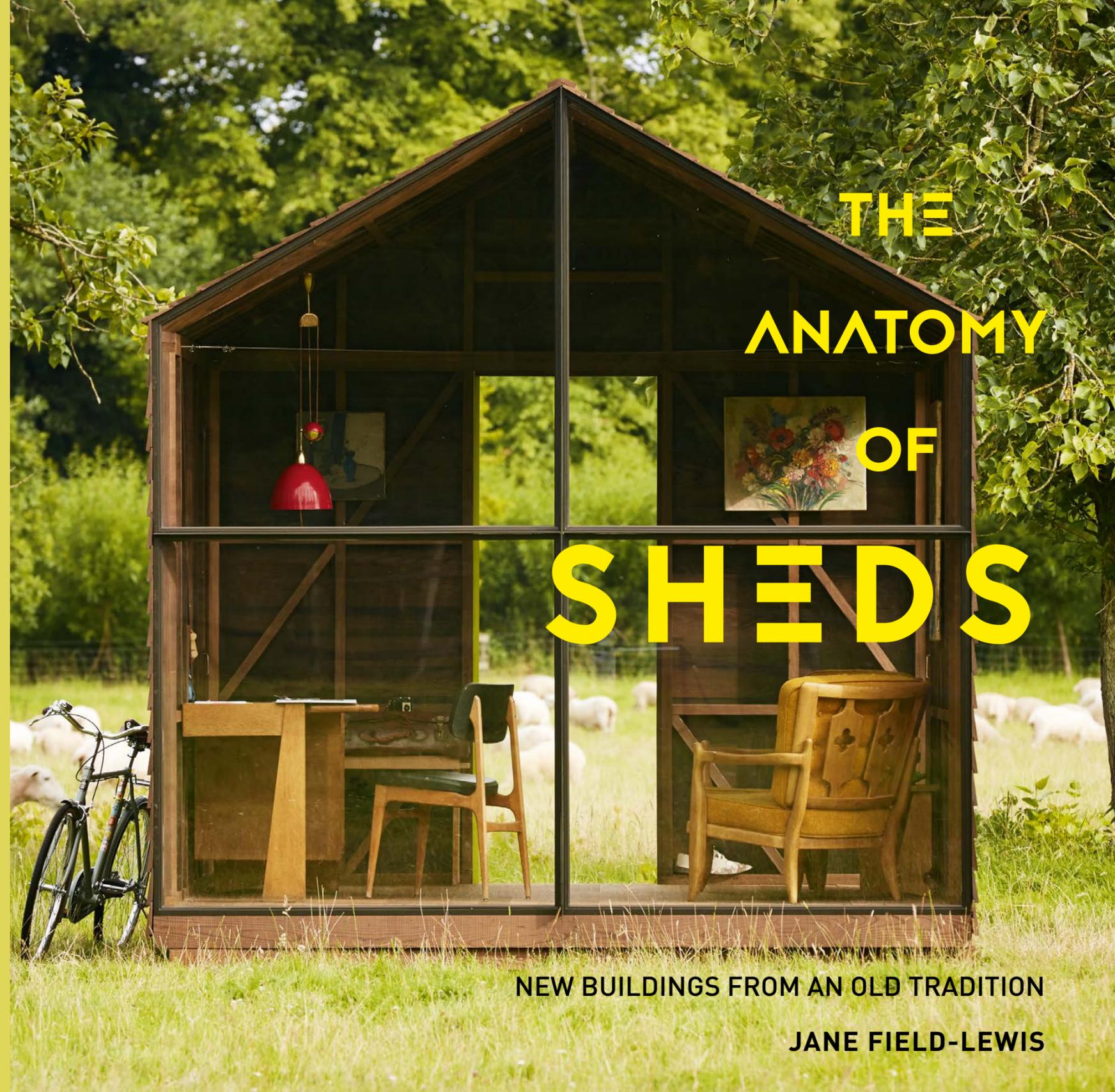
# THE ANATOMY OF SHEDS

JANE FIELD-LEWIS

\$30.00 U.S.



GIBBS SMITH



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NEW BUILDINGS FROM AN OLD TRADITION

JANE FIELD-LEWIS



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Created for a family in Seattle, this practical attractive backyard storage space serves as a modern architectural re-invention of the classic garden potting shed. Only too often, an effective garden repository means a hidden-away ramshackle building stuffed to the gills with out-of-season items you don't know what to do with. However, here the Seattle-based SHED architecture and design practice has created a means of garden storage that is both practical and beautiful.

## THE BACKGROUND

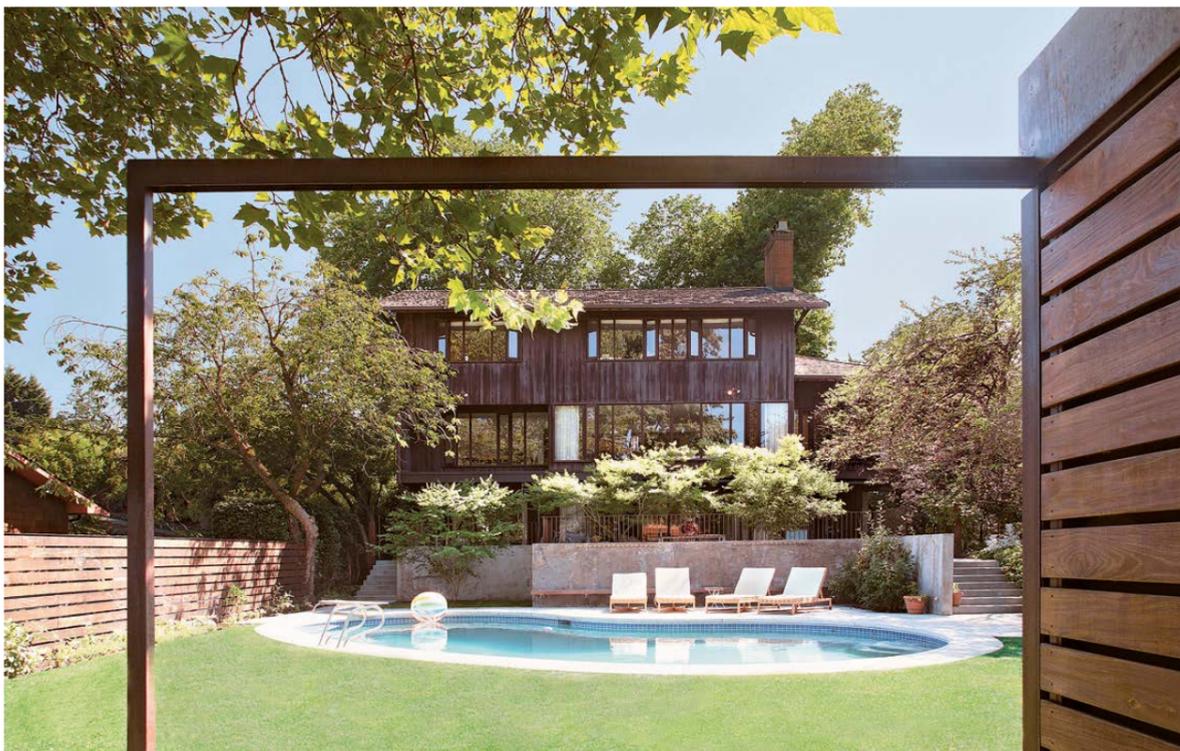
The commission to remodel the back garden of a mid-century house looked at the whole design of the exterior space. The house had no obvious storage areas, such as a basement or garage, and the only place to create additional storage space was within the back garden. However, planning restrictions did not permit any building too near the rear perimeter fence, so the design needed to be within the garden area itself and have a visual presence to warrant a prime position within the backyard.

## DESIGN BRIEF

The design brief from the client was to provide more storage for bicycles and garden equipment within the whole garden scheme as well as a potting shed area with enough space to store gardening materials. In addition, this was a place where the owners could work and tend the plants. It was designed as an S-shaped structure with two faces of color to make it fun to interact with. Key to the architect Prentice's design philosophy were simplicity, how the structure blends with the rest of the garden and the visual balance the building needed to achieve – enough to warrant its position but not so much that it overwhelmed the space as a whole. The building was given a green roof to help it meld seamlessly into the garden when it was viewed from above.

## MATERIALS

Using a steel structure that has a mild surface rust finish added a richer color and character to the building. The wood cladding is Brazilian cherry, a hardwood that is very resistant to decay, greys with age and needs no rot protection. The cladding was definitely part of the overall look and feel of the shed in its space in such a prime location in the yard. The walls and cladding were designed to blend with the existing fencing in the garden.



## STYLE NOTES

Echoing an angular mid-century architectural pavilion, this simply shaped functional garden storage shed has acquired an elegance. The steel beams that shoot out from the building expand its presence in the garden and help to soften the potential for the exterior of the shed to look severe or to end abruptly visually. The material choice helps the shed contextually to fit in with the rest of the garden.

Designing the walls in horizontal slats, with a regular spaced gap between them prevents the structure appearing too heavy. The opening and closing of the different sections, with the doors sliding open, means that it feels more like a building you interact with rather than simply enter. It has a surprising lightness of touch, almost the feel of a magic box that opens up via secret compartments.

The interior of the shed, although it's used for storage, echoes that spirit. Painted with leftover paint from decorating the children's bedrooms, the potting shed on one side is a bright blue; the bike and kayak store on the other side, pink. Over time the external tonal palette will naturally evolve with the weathering of the steel and the cherry wood, gaining a greyish hue and blending into the surrounding garden.

The interior sections are painted with leftover paint from the house. This adds an energy, a surprising counterpoint to the regular form of the cherry wood and steel exterior.

When the sliding doors are closed, the steel surround on which they run frames the view looking back towards the house and also creates a visual link, which helps to soften the abruptness of the building within the garden itself.

# TESSA'S BACK GARDEN STUDIO



In the old orchard at the back of artist Tessa Fahey's Norfolk home stands her studio, an elegant blue-painted, weather-boarded, double-fronted structure with a traditional Norfolk tiled roof and a verandah running along the front. Tessa's husband John, an architectural carpenter, built this large art-filled cabin for her on site. Their long-term plan is to transition from the main house and eventually move up into the garden to build a new home there. This is their first step in that direction.

## HISTORY AND EVOLUTION

John built the 19 x 16ft (6 x 5m) studio with softwood and cladding about 20 years ago on the site of a former treehouse and old stable. Its original purpose was a place to keep tools and to use as a small workshop. Over the years it has had many uses – John and Tessa's son lived there for a while before it became her painting studio. Originally she used to paint in an upstairs room in the family house, but she always yearned for her own special space and having one gives her a sense of freedom – there are no telephones, no internet. Every day she hears herself saying, 'Let's go to the cabin', and this is an invitation to her friends and family to share and join in the creative and artistic experience.

The studio is surprisingly large inside with several areas where Tessa and her friends can work. With doors and windows with two different aspects and roof lights, the natural light for working is good throughout the day. The blue 1960s chair is the prime spot for relaxing in front of the stove.



## A SHARED SPACE

Inspired by her Swedish heritage, Tessa painted her studio a restful blue. A straight gravelled path leads up a slight incline from the back of the house, which is partially hidden by hedges, so it feels separate with its own identity. Every day she brings her two flasks, one of coffee and the other of herbal tea, and sits in the 1960s blue vinyl swivel chair by the fire. She puts on some music or starts pacing up and down, thinking through the work for that day. Offcuts of wood from John's work as a carpenter are used to light the antique wood-burning stove.

Wednesday mornings are open studio here where two friends, fellow local women artists, come and share the space, making coffee, working together, developing ideas, and inspiring and critiquing each other's work. However, for the rest of the week this is Tessa's studio, although she considers it an 'open door', a shared space where people can come to talk and think through ideas. Tessa likes to walk up and down – it's her preferred means of developing an idea, and if it's still unclear, she sits and thinks by the Danish stove. There's a large north-facing skylight above the plan chest, which she uses as a cutting table for her collage projects, and a large easel for her paintings. Her preferred style is abstraction but, as she says, 'Sometimes I make myself be more specific.'



# BACKYARD

The dream of owning our very own backyard shed can motivate our creativity and encourage us to find innovative solutions to the problem of creating practical spaces in our homes. The sheds featured here have a variety of uses and function as home offices, workshops, rented accommodation, chill-out spaces and even a cinema. Practical yet inspirational, they each have their own individual aesthetic appeal and delight us with their ingenuity and style.

Caitlin Long's San Francisco home office started out as a typical garden tool shed but is now a stylish space with a strong aesthetic, where she can work or hang out with family and friends. Further up the coast in Seattle is an elegant yet practical re-invention of a potting shed. It blends seamlessly into its surroundings and even has a green roof to camouflage it from above. And inspired by "bacon and tomato sandwiches, fresh salads and dill pickles," a retired engineer used locally sourced reclaimed materials to hand-build his own remarkable greenhouse in Nova Scotia for growing organic vegetables.

Across the pond in England, the architect Ben Davidson has created one of the most precise garden sheds ever made. His model-making workshop was designed to fit around the workbench and tools he inherited from his grandfather, a talented carpenter. He likes it so much that it is now the prototype for the sheds he designs for his clients. There's even an "impossible" shed in a London back garden that's used as a cinema, projection space and studio. To comply with local planning legislation, it was cleverly designed to have two stories housed within a one-story exterior. Visually striking and dynamic in its conception, it works on a practical level as well as being full of surprises.

You can turn your back garden into a thriving business as illustrated by the writer J. Wes Yoder's Nashville vintage caravan. With only basic DIY skills, he did all the restoration work himself and transformed it into a cool "guest room" with a bathhouse and outdoor shower. In no time at all he had bookings for weeks ahead and it earns him rental income. And a serial shed-building artist from Scotland used salvaged scaffolding boards, tin roofing and glass from a dismantled conservatory to build a very special treehouse with far-ranging views over the surrounding countryside, and now rents it out to passing cyclists. Who would have thought that the humble backyard shed could be manifested in so many styles and guises?

# HAND-BUILT GREENHOUSE

Jerry Reddy is the quintessential Canadian outdoors man. A retired telephone engineer, he has a deep passion for nature, not only in its most epic form but also its smallest details. He is especially interested in geology, conservation and living an environmentally sensitive life. Originally from Ontario, he was raised in a family with an outdoor practical lifestyle; they went wild camping, setting off with just a backpack and making impromptu shelters as they went along. Now living with his wife on a 64-acre (30-ha) estate in the maritime climate of Nova Scotia, Jerry has had to adapt to deal with a windswept cooler location and to grow the vegetables they enjoyed in Ontario. To achieve this he built himself a greenhouse. What's so unusual about that...well, read on.

## A SELF-SUFFICIENT LIFESTYLE

The couple live in the most self-sufficient way possible, growing as much of their food as they can, using organic principles and heritage seeds. They cultivate tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers, and each season they collect and store the seeds, ready to plant again the following year. At this period of his life, Jerry has found a richness and developed a different approach and purpose: 'My philosophy in life has changed as I age and now into my sixties I am more concerned with permanency than looks. I want the things that I build to last for a very long time. Here I am in northern Nova Scotia, living a very different life to the one I had in Ontario. I work alone most of the time and I've adopted the mindset that you must rely solely on yourself to achieve your goals, much the same as the early pioneers would have done. Self-reliance and hard work are the order of my life.'

## THE GEOGRAPHY

Over the years the land use of the estate had gradually changed. Once heavily wooded, the land had been cleared for grazing for livestock and modern large-scale agricultural practices. Unlike Ontario, the weather here in Nova Scotia is wild, windy, stormy and cold.



## JERRY'S PHILOSOPHY AND INSPIRATION

Jerry's essential philosophy in life is 'to keep everything as simple and as near to the old ways as possible and to think in terms of how the early pioneers would have done things before we had everything we do today. And my inspirations for the greenhouse...bacon and tomato sandwiches, fresh salads and dill pickles!'

## SKILLS

Jerry has always been a self-taught and very practical man, learning many of his skills when he was a child watching other members of his family at work, as well as through trial and error helping to build cabins and go-carts in the 1950s and '60s. Later on in life when he bought his own house, he purchased a copy of the *Reader's Digest DIY Manual*, and from that source he learnt everything else he needed to know.

## STYLE NOTES

As soon as the building was finished, Jerry and his wife gathered an eclectic assortment of things they liked from the surrounding area and put them on the shelves in the greenhouse. 'We found a poor owl that had met his end somehow and there he rests on a shelf with a beaver as a neighbor. We always marvel at the intricate weaves of birds' nests and how perfectly shaped they are, even after they have reared their young, so we added these, too.'

In keeping with the recycled nature of this project everything they collected and displayed inside the greenhouse has had a previous use. The different colored old glass bottles were dug up from a garbage dump and displayed against the window panes: 'The colors of the glass bottles catch the sunshine and give us a ray of hope for a good harvest in the fall.' The cattle skull comes from the period when the land was used for grazing, and their huge respect for the natural world means that items such as crows' and rooks' nests, bones and birds' feathers, all found around the property have each been given their special place. Preserved and displayed in all their different shapes and styles, each nest provides an illustration of the creativity of the birds that collected the different materials and constructed them.

Jerry left any original paint on the wooden windows rather than strip them 'so that the greenhouse would look as if it had been there for many years. The colors blend into our northern skies that are so often grey, filled with snow and rain.'

Decorating a practical space requires careful thought. Here, using found objects from the land, still life vignettes have been created that represent the area and the previous uses of the land. The items and the effect of their collection and grouping is beautiful, genuine and relevant.



Cabanas No Rio was the second project for Joao Rodrigues (see page 100) following the commercial success and critical acclaim for Casas Na Areia, which was originally designed as a family weekend retreat but evolved into an eco-friendly hotel. With a full-time job as a pilot, various business interests and a busy lifestyle, Joao wanted a laid-back place to unwind with his family and friends – where he and his wife could relax and his children could experience the natural world and have more freedom.

## ARCHETYPAL FORMS

These two rustic 150sq ft (14sq m) cabins stand on the banks of the River Sado beside a picturesque small jetty on stilts. It's only a one-hour drive from Lisbon to the village of Comporta set in a magnificent watery nature reserve. Across the water is the unique stilted palafitte harbor of Carrasqueira, a masterpiece of folk architecture. This fragile-looking port was an ingenious solution for the local fishing community, enabling them to access their boats during low tides when the riverbanks were muddy.

The actual forms are highly archetypal and each of these spaces has its own specific function. The first cabin consists of a bedroom with an ensuite bathroom and an unusual shower that can be used outside as well as indoors. The second cabin is a living area with a small kitchen equipped for preparing and cooking simple meals.

## INSPIRATION

The old cabanas had previously been fishermen's shacks and when Joao bought them he installed a few chairs so the family could just spend the day there relaxing. However, despite the lack of basic comforts and utilities, his children wanted to sleep there overnight and he and his wife started thinking about what they would need to do to make staying there a pleasurable experience for the whole family.

## RESPECTING LOCAL TRADITIONS

Working again with his friend the architect Manuel Aires Mateus, Joao's plan was to completely refurbish the fishing shacks and create a romantic refuge from the pressures of the modern world. They decided to achieve this by using and recycling local materials and respecting regional skills, crafts and traditions. They wanted to mirror the concept of the medieval palafitte wharf, which was constructed solely from wood. 'Its identity has remained intact long beyond the material's resistance, enabling it to be changed and replaced while keeping all its original values intact.'



The internal wooden surfaces reflect the materials used in the construction. The recycled local materials are so limited and simple that your eye is naturally drawn to the spectacular natural watery landscape outside. The four-sided angular roof creates a lofty feel, making the small interior space feel larger and more relaxing.



## MATERIALS AND BUILD

The two cabanas are entirely finished in recycled local wooden panels, which are left exposed (both inside and out) to weather attractively with the passing of time and the seasons. They were built off-site in a carpenter's workshop and then transported on the back of a lorry to their current location on the edge of the estuary with their own private deck and pontoon. Once the initial design had been completed, the project was relatively quick and easy to implement and the cabanas were ready in just over six months.

## STYLE NOTES

Exuding calm and tranquillity, these cabanas are simply finished and furnished. Natural materials and a palette of neutral muted colors have been used to instill the space with a sense of simplicity, helping you to disconnect from the material world and to engage with nature. This place is really captivating – you can put all your worries and stress aside and have time to indulge yourself and to focus on the important things in life: family, friendship and love.

Nevertheless, despite the ‘other worldly’ feel, you aren’t entirely cut off from the things we take for granted in the modern world; there’s a Wi-Fi connection and an iPod docking station, but no television. You have to make your own amusements here. When you’re not walking, swimming, cooking or just meditating, you can venture out across the estuary in the kayak ‘parked’ beside the pontoon.

The roof of the bedroom was designed purposefully to be higher at the front than the back, making you feel protected and held safely within the building – it’s reassuringly snug. As a contrast, in the living room in the other cabana, the incline of the ceiling gives you the sensation of being projected into the natural world outside. This clever design adds tension to each space, according to its function.

The furniture, though simple, is very stylish and doesn’t overwhelm, blending seamlessly into the whole. The comfortable deep Gervasoni and Ghost armchairs covered in white linen are by Paola Navone with side tables to match. The four-poster bed, swathed in white muslin with gleaming white pillows and bed covers, adds a touch of luxury but, again, it is constructed very simply with everything reduced to the unfussy minimal basics. On hot summer days, the doors to the shower room can be thrown open wide,

transporting you outside, whereas on colder days, they can be closed to create a cosy, warm-toned space.

Decorative objects are kept to the bare minimum throughout: a traditional steel fan, a white table lamp and books. The lighting is warm yet subdued, and the wood-panelled walls almost make you feel cocooned – it’s like being back in the womb. For Joao, this project ‘confirms the lost paradigm of life – that true happiness is based on the intelligent use of simplicity’. And how right he is.

**‘the old cabanas had been fishermen’s shacks and Joao installed a few chairs so the family could spend the day there relaxing, but, despite the lack of basic comforts and utilities, his children wanted to sleep there overnight...’**

