

GRAND DESIGNS

Modern Homes / Architecture / Design / Interiors / Property

2010
AWARD WINNER
EXCLUSIVE

Hunsett Mill, Norfolk



January 2011

Dream spaces

45 PAGES OF INSPIRATIONAL REAL HOMES

Restored barn / Church conversion / Rural renovation / Coastal retreat

New year, new home?

Improve your property's selling potential

Boutique bathrooms

How to create the perfect en suite

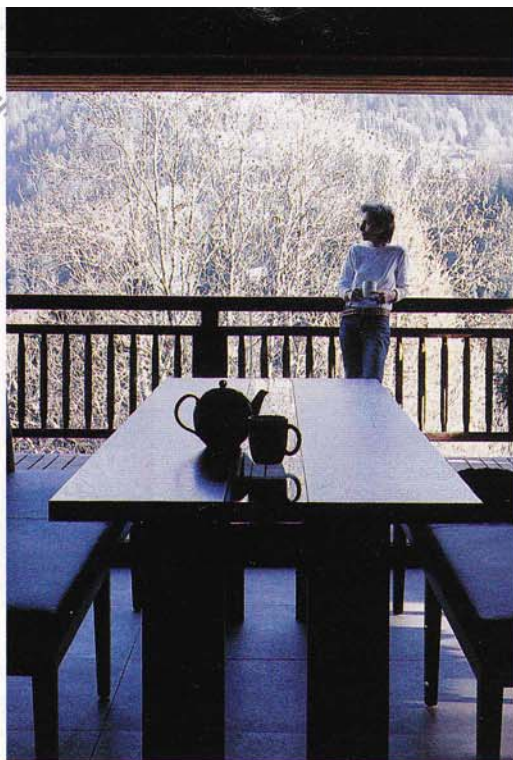
INTELLIGENT STORAGE IDEAS

Made-to-measure architectural solutions to design away your clutter

SHOPPING Modular sofas • Range cookers • Dining chairs • Statement wine



above With one giant airy room for dining, cooking and lounging, the first floor is the chalet's hub
left The two-storey building has views across the valley and Les Gets to the peaks of the Portes du Soleil



left Nicky stands outside La Ferme de Moudon, her ultimate Alpine getaway
far left An open fire warms up the living area in the winter

Words of wisdom

TV grand designer and interiors specialist Nicky Dobre converted a 300-year-old farmhouse in the French Alps into a stylish and contemporary ski chalet. Here are her tips for a large-scale renovation

Words Sarah Baldwin Photography Edina van der Wyck

What would you say to others embarking on such a large project?

'It's essential to have a master plan for the whole project before starting off, including a full set of drawings and a complete costing, so that you can budget properly. Don't underestimate the time that it will take and ensure that you don't cut corners in order to finish on time – you will only regret it later.'

Was getting planning permission tricky?

'It took us 18 months to get permission! It is a very old farmhouse, so there were countless rules and regulations. It's essential to work with a local architect to get planning permission. We had to keep the original facade, but were able to design the interior exactly to our taste.'

Any other issues with restoring an old building?

'We encountered a few problems. The foundations of the building were not what we had hoped, and the timber was so old it was rotten.'

What's the most important thing to consider when designing a chalet?

'Timber absorbs a huge amount of light,

so never underestimate the amount of light that is needed in a room. Moreover, your choice of wood is crucial to the final look and feel of your home. Ensure that you speak the local language and make regular trips to the site so you know what is going on.'

Any advice for dealing with tricky contractors?

'Being a female on site is never easy. Luckily, as a designer, I knew what I was talking about, even though it went against what the local contractors were used to building in the Alps. I stuck to my beliefs and it paid off.'

What is the best thing you spent money on?

'The kitchen. There's always a premium for bespoke work, but it's usually worth it. You pay for what you get. Good design is all in the attention to detail.'

What was the best and worst pieces of advice you were given?

'Don't give up. And the worst was don't do it.'

To stay at Nicky's chalet in the French Alps, call 020 7627 0469 or go to fermedemoudon.com; to see more of her designs, visit nickydobre.com