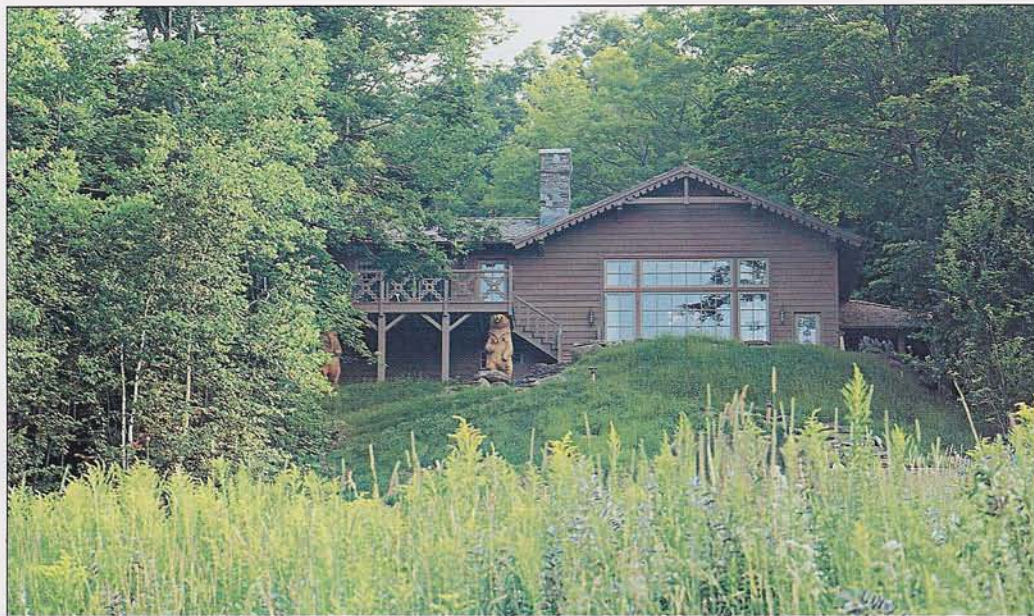


Twin Farms, in Barnard, Vermont, is one of New England's most exclusive unbuttoned retreats. An elegantly rustic, subtly extravagant, impeccably but discreetly administered hotel, it is a clever marriage of high and low at nearly every turn. These paradoxes have been worked into a smooth, easygoing perfection that extends to the last drinking glass (made, inevitably, by Simon Pearce, whose glass-blowing workshop is in nearby Quechee).

Over the past nine years the Honolulu-based Twigg-Smith family and hotel managers extraordinaire Beverley and Shaun Matthews have transformed the farm—which once belonged to the novelist Sinclair Lewis and his wife, journalist Dorothy Thompson—into a showcase of imaginative architecture and interior design. The first two rounds of work on the property included the renovation of four rooms in the main house and the construction of eight freestanding cottages that were the brainchild of Alan Wanzenberg and Jed Johnson (see *Architectural Digest*, November 1996). Wanzenberg and Johnson devised a program that exemplified the farm's paradoxical atmosphere by creating cottages whose exterior architecture remained safely and solidly within the New England farmhouse vernacu-

ABOVE RIGHT: "We kept the original footprint," architect Scott Cornelius says of the Alpine-style house that he and interior designer Thad Hayes transformed into a new chalet at Twin Farms, in Barnard, Vermont. RIGHT: In the entrance hall, a pair of cement-and-river-stone vases rest on a birch-bark-veneered console.



Twin Farms

THE NEW ENGLAND RETREAT ADDS A CHALET
MARRYING RUSTICITY AND WHIMSY

Architecture by Scott Cornelius, AIA/Interior Design by Thad Hayes
Text by Michael Frank/Photography by Bruce Katz



lar, while their interiors were exuberantly, almost defiantly, different, as much from the restrained façades as from one's notion of what a Vermont country cottage ought to be. These interiors were like children playing a particularly stylish version of dress-up: One cottage was Italianate, another Moroccan; one was a log cabin whose décor can best be described as canine (paw-print rug, a chair with arms carved in the shape of dogs' heads); another was Scandinavian; still another was rendered as a utopian contemporary artist's studio, com-

OPPOSITE: The furniture in the living room achieves a modern look, yet it remains tied to the architecture through natural and muted colors. "The rustic elements called for something more polished and contemporary," notes Hayes, who designed the low table. Sheer drapery fabric from Cowtan & Tout.



VERMONT

plete with easel and wood drawing mannequin (but no splashes of paint on the floor).

It was the success of this last cottage—the inn's most spacious—that persuaded the owners to add a new and even more ample accommodation, which has been named Chalet. Unlike the rest of the cottages at Twin Farms, Chalet is not a piece of original construction but rather a modest 1960s Alpine-style Vermont cabin that became an idealized and witty version of its former, humble self. The reinvention was overseen by Scott Cornelius, the project architect on the earlier round of building at Twin Farms, and interior designer Thad Hayes, who is collaborating with the Twigg-Smiths and the Matthews on Timber Hill, a resort currently in progress in Sonoma County, California.

The house that Cornelius began with had a cluttered

RIGHT: The bedroom's wall panels were hand-planed by local craftsmen. "The whole building is very much about texture and sheen," Cornelius says. A Donald Deskey floor lamp stands near an oak bed frame. **BELOW:** Soft Roman shades and a circa 1913 Arts and Crafts vase accent one of the two baths.



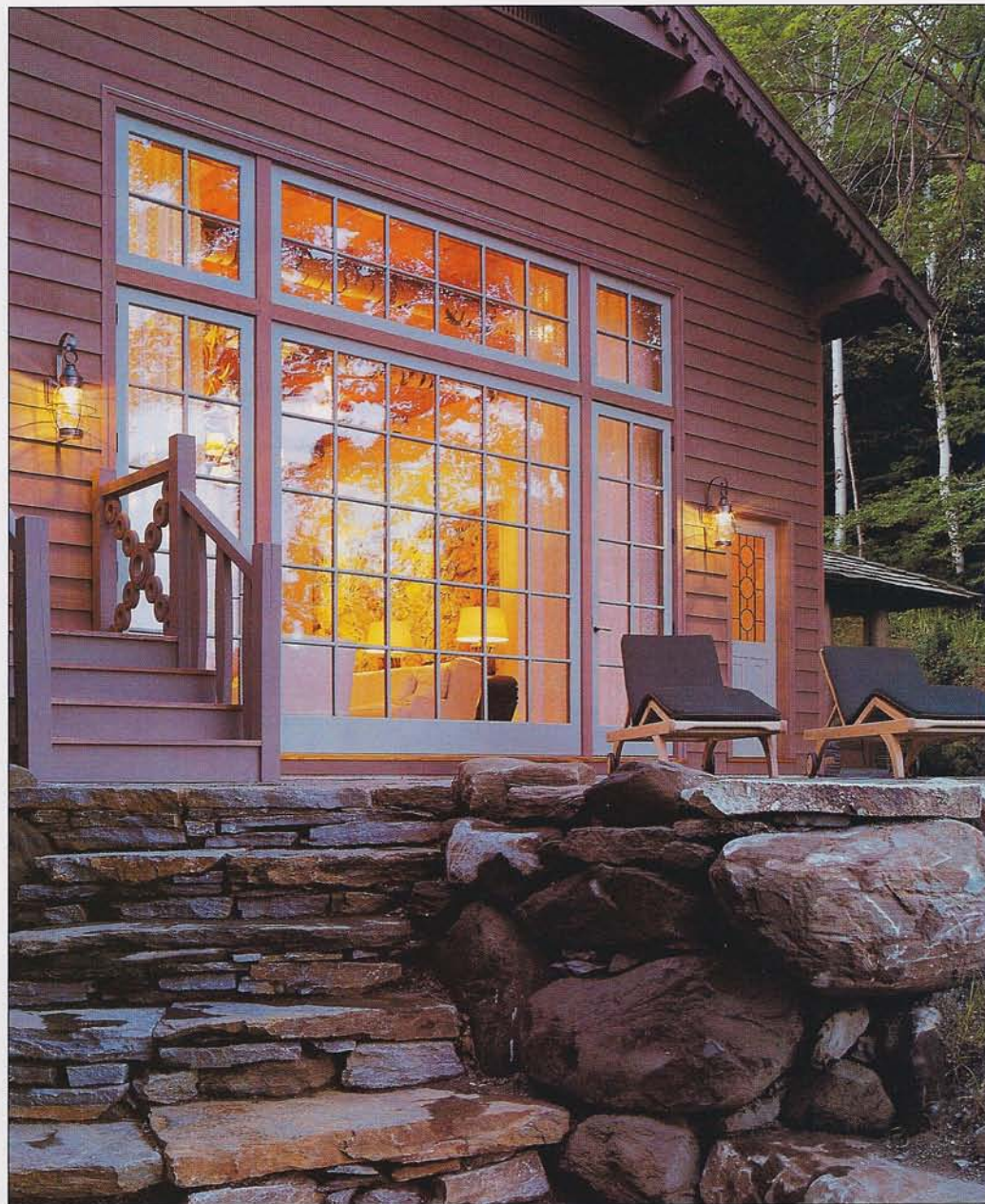
floor plan, low ceilings, sliding glass doors and a less than perfect view of the meadow and distant, undulating hills. What he calls its "badly considered" take on the Swiss chalet wanted serious rethinking. But the footprint was about right, the roofline handsome, the siting ideal. His approach? To remake the house from the inside out.

Like most of the cottages at Twin Farms, Chalet is very much a building about surprises. The structure's low scale and simple façade in no way alert visitors to the drama of the interior, which was

thoroughly reconfigured by Cornelius. Now a cozy entrance hall and dining area/library step down to a bold living room with a double-height ceiling, a floor-to-ceiling stone fireplace and wood-framed windows that fully embrace the remarkable view. A comfortable paneled bedroom with a fireplace and resplendent his-and-her baths complete the floor plan. But this summary gives little sense of the prevailing panache of the whole ambience.

In reimagining the chalet, Cornelius set out to be at

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ABOVE RIGHT: The front stair railing was influenced by Norse architecture. RIGHT: The stone terrace, located just off the living room at the front of the chalet, faces south and looks to Mount Ascutney and a ski run that intersects the property. The chaise longue has a detachable footrest and is made of teak.



TWIN FARMS

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once dramatic, whimsical and plush. The drama comes from the volume of rooms and their views. The whimsy is in the details: the chainsaw bears that hold up the bedroom terrace, the tumbling bear tiles embedded in the paneling in the master bedroom, the stylized icicles that hang from the house's eaves. Plushness, as ever at Twin Farms, is in the craftsmanship: sugar pine paneling that is stained three times, then waxed; walls that are given a textured plaster finish, then a coating of milk paint, followed by one of tinted wax; bull's-eye glass roundels that are set into certain windows; exquisite tilework; a thatch roof that encloses the spa and the screen porch. "People come here for a weekend," Cornelius explains, "and we want them to discover the house's details, gradually and with pleasure, over time."

"Having worked on all of the other cottages, Scott was the ideal architect," says Beverley Matthews. "He knew our approach: modest exteriors with remarkable interiors. And Thad was a great listener. He found a way to interpret what we were looking for."

Hayes, who is no stranger to quality of detail himself, approached the interior design as he does most projects, through a study of models and precedents. "I wasn't able to find much in Swiss architecture that spoke to me," he explains, "so I came up with my own take." Hayes, who designed most of the furniture for Chalet, used "earthy, rough" materials, choosing some traditional Arts and Crafts-style pieces for the bedroom. Slightly edgier, more modern items went into the living room, where the upholstered furniture is slipcovered in linen for summer and in chocolate-brown flannel for winter. There is an antler chandelier and playful sheer curtains that remain on the window year-round and "abstractly but, I think, humorously" evoke snow.

Abstraction and humor, playfulness and craftsmanship, subtlety and splendor: These Twin Farms lodestars keep the hotel, luxurious though it is, connected to its early, earthy roots, when the farm, Thompson wrote Lewis, was "the best expression in life of both of us: beautiful, comfortable, hospitable and unpretentious." All this, and the food is delicious too. □

HOTEL ASTORIA

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Most of all, she worked with what was still in the hotel—original parquet floors, objects that had been stored in the Hermitage for safety but were returned, splendid chandeliers that had survived all the political storms.

The hotel was built in 1912, a time when St. Petersburg was alive with the spirit of the Ballets Russes, Diaghilev, Bakst and Stravinsky. A Russian version of Art Nouveau called Northern Moderne flourished, and Fyodor Lidval was its greatest exponent. He designed the Hotel Astoria with rounded corners and swirling plasterwork.

Then, in 1917, came the revolution. There were demonstrations outside on St. Isaac's Square, and the hotel was stormed and searched but stayed open during World War I. Throughout World War II it was used as a hospital and a refuge for the homeless. During his nine-hundred-day siege of St. Petersburg, Hitler planned a victory party at the Astoria and even printed invitations, but he never got there.

Now there is a new St. Petersburg. Putin is a local boy, and the Astoria is his favorite hotel—his friends and visiting dignitaries always stay here.

In June and early July there are festivals during the White Nights, that flat silver light of the midnight hours; in the autumn the crowds have left, and the

**The hotel was built in
a time when St.
Petersburg was alive
with the excitement of
Diaghilev and Bakst.**

Kirov opera and ballet are back at the Mariinsky Theatre; in January and February there are crisp dry snows, and the samovars are heating up all over town; in the spring there is Easter, the greatest Russian celebration.

Visitors are still awed by the opulence of the gilded domes and spires that rise above the palaces. But there is a new spirit in St. Petersburg, and the Astoria is part of it, providing a fresh interpretation of Russia in a city renowned for its past. □

LA VALENCIA

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The rooms are airy and unpretentious, harmonious medleys of white-fir beams, plantation shutters and cozy oversize sofas and armchairs. But the amenities are state-of-the-art. Interior designer Hank Milam dressed the beds in plush goose down. He installed digital Lyceum audio systems and televisions that rise from low consoles with the stealth of a periscope. The baths are wrapped in pale marble, equipped with whirlpool tubs, double sinks and steam showers. They're like mini-spas minus the locker keys and attendants.

Or all but one attendant. The heart of villa life is twenty-four-hour private butler service—specifically, a bow-tied young man who introduces himself with the pledge, "I am here to cater to your every whim." If at first it sounds gimmicky, guests get used to it. Provided with their own phones, the butlers serve as personal concierges. They make golf tee times, arrange meals in the glamorous Sky Room, conjure up Cristal and kiwifruit for a romantic picnic. Or not. If you don't pick up the phone, Jeeves is invisible.

According to the hotel management, the villas cater to the discerning of all stripes. There are upscale itinerants from Los Angeles and New York and Europe. There are techies who have been lured by the Salk Institute and the start-ups that have won La Jolla yet another appellation: Telecom Valley. And there is, of course, the latest wave of entertainment worthies. Madonna recently put up in a villa, as did the members of Pearl Jam. "Eddie Vedder used to be a security guard at La Valencia," reveals Ullman. "He was known for always playing his guitar on the job."

La Valencia celebrates its seventy-fifth anniversary this December. The Pink Lady may be aging more gracefully than La Jolla itself. The town's once sleepy avenues of art galleries and sidewalk cafés now support high-rises and traffic jams. The area still enjoys a rich design heritage, including numerous projects by the early modernist Irving Gill (his Wilson Acton Hotel, later called Hotel Cabrillo, was adjacent to La Valencia until it was acquired by the hotel in 1956—it now comprises the west wing). And for more leisurely pursuits, there are, as always, the hoyas. □