



When renovating a centuries-old beach cottage in Cornwall, architect Adam Casey of Watershedd covered one of the existing additions in vertical black timber (above). The material is in stark contrast to the rough-hewn walls of the original stone structure.

**Visits to Cornwall have always given** Gaby Dellal what her thriving career and cosmopolitan life never could: a slower pace. Jutting into the Celtic Sea from the southwestern tip of England, the county—where wrinkled headlands rise from ice-blue waters and visitors can walk along its coast for miles without seeing a soul—offered an escape from Gaby's work as a film director who ping-pongs between London and New York. Her three sons often tagged

along to ride the waves that make Cornwall one of Europe's best surfing spots.

Years ago, a friend there tipped her off to a 17th-century stone cottage for sale in the northern village of St. Agnes. Set upon the cliffs of scenic Trevaunance Cove, the 1,600-square-foot structure—whose former iterations included a coast-guard lodging and a fish house—proved irresistible, and Gaby decided to buy it.

But the cottage wasn't the most >

## Shelter From the Storm

**A film director transforms a 17th-century cottage into a surf retreat that blends into England's Cornish coastline.**

**“For us, the owner’s involvement was really exciting. We ended up doing a job that was much more eccentric than what’s usually seen in this market.”**

MARZOUK AL-BADER, DESIGNER



comfortable place to unwind. Previous owners had increased its footprint, and the interior spaces felt cramped and disconnected. A large, tired-looking extension howled with the constant hammering of winds off the sea, and there wasn’t a place where her boys, coming in from the surf, could store their boards and rinse off.

In 2017, Gaby attended a dinner party at the home of a neighbor, Marzouk Al-Bader, cofounder with Adam Casey and Poppy Trevillion of the design firm Watershedd. Taken by the way his place reflected the area’s coastal character, she decided to update the cottage and hired his firm for the job. “In Cornwall, the pace of life is the pace of the sea—it’s spiritual in many ways, and we want to capture that,” Al-Bader says of Watershedd’s work,



Gaby sourced many of the interior furnishings from salvaged goods dealers and reclamation yards. The hanging rail in the surf room (opposite) and several pieces of furniture in the living/dining space (left) came from Retrouvius. The sink (below) is by Crosswater London. The designers were very cognizant of the cottage’s sensitive surroundings when renovating the structure (bottom). The home lies within a government-designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



which focuses on houses in the region. “Gaby understood our approach,” says Casey. “We were a good match.”

To create more room without disrupting the site’s natural beauty, Watershedd looked to the land—and dug in. Further excavating the rocky terrain below the home, they created a surfboard room, media room, and fourth bedroom, which connect to the existing below-grade bedroom and living area.

They also covered the wind-worn, L-shaped extension in black-coated larch cladding and added a steel terrace with an oak barrier, which is weathered by spray from the sea below. Gorse-filled hedges and native Cornish plants were placed around the premises. Steps made of old railroad ties and flanked by stone >



renovation



walls—laid by a local stonemason who carved each rock to fit into a given place—lead to the ground-level entrance. Inside, Watershedd removed walls to create airy, open rooms. A stairway leads to the lower floor, where the surfboard room, finished in ocher-polished plaster, is illuminated by a pair of skylights. Its shower is separated by a glass-block wall (“We went a bit retro with that,” Casey admits), as a sleek sheet of glass didn’t fit the aesthetic.

For Gaby, the cottage has become a refuge from her transatlantic professional life, a place of privacy and quiet. In fact, since completing the project last summer, Watershedd hasn’t heard much from her about the house. “Previously it was too small, and it’s still small. But it’s much more comfortable now, and she spends more time there than she ever had before,” Al-Bader says of his neighbor. “To me, that’s very good feedback.” ■

An outdoor shower (left) is at the ready for post-beach cleanups. In the dining room (below), the white-washed floorboards, walls, and ceiling provide a bright contrast to the tempestuous Cornwall weather.

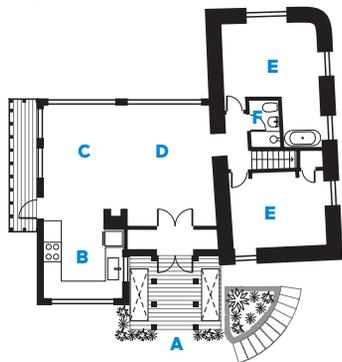
Gull Cottage



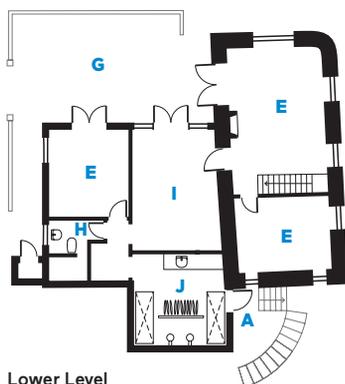
ARCHITECT Watershedd

LOCATION St. Agnes, Cornwall, England

- A Entrance
- B Kitchen
- C Dining Area
- D Living Area
- E Bedroom
- F Bathroom
- G Terrace
- H Powder Room
- I Media Room
- J Wet Room



Ground Floor



Lower Level



ILLUSTRATION: LOHNES + WRIGHT